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Jan 14  
Red Crossides

Red  
Cross



Miss Alice J. Thompson  
English 10  
January, 1931-32

Miss Gladys Francis Vass  
Miss Alice Jane Thompson  
Senior

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benefactor to the community  
manufacturing

2 to the ... better

3 to the ...  
Shakespeare

Hearthside through Lowell

Speech on Life on some  
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Leaves of grass





# AMERICAN LITERATURE

A TEXTBOOK FOR  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

BY

PERCY H. BOYNTON

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



GINN AND COMPANY

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## PREFACE

In working on this textbook I have tried throughout to lead the students direct to the literature, to make the comments simple and intelligible, and to offer help to busy teachers toward the presentation of the subject. I have been guided by my belief that students of high-school age can be much more interested in the content of literature than they can be in the form of it; that they can very easily be bored and mystified by overstress on style and structure; and that they have a natural inclination to connect a work of art with the person who created it and the period in which he lived. But I have tried to make a book which should not be a taskmaster for the student nor a narrow-gauge single-track railway for the teacher.

The emphasis is first, last, and always on the literature, to which the book is only an introduction. The attempt has been made to suggest such reading as students can understand, to deal with such phases of it as they can grasp, and to discuss these in language that will not require the use of a dictionary. There are footnotes for technical literary terms, outlines at the heads of chapters to show the way, and corresponding paragraph-heads to tell them where they are at any given point. There are questions to keep in mind as they read the literature, and at the ends of the chapters review questions on the text, on the readings, and on the historical background as indicated in the Chronological Charts and Outlines.

No competent English teacher would tolerate for long a textbook which seemed to reduce him to the rôle of a recorder of attendance and a keeper of class records. The final agent in the teaching of literature is the man or woman who presides in the classroom. Yet it should not be forgotten that the



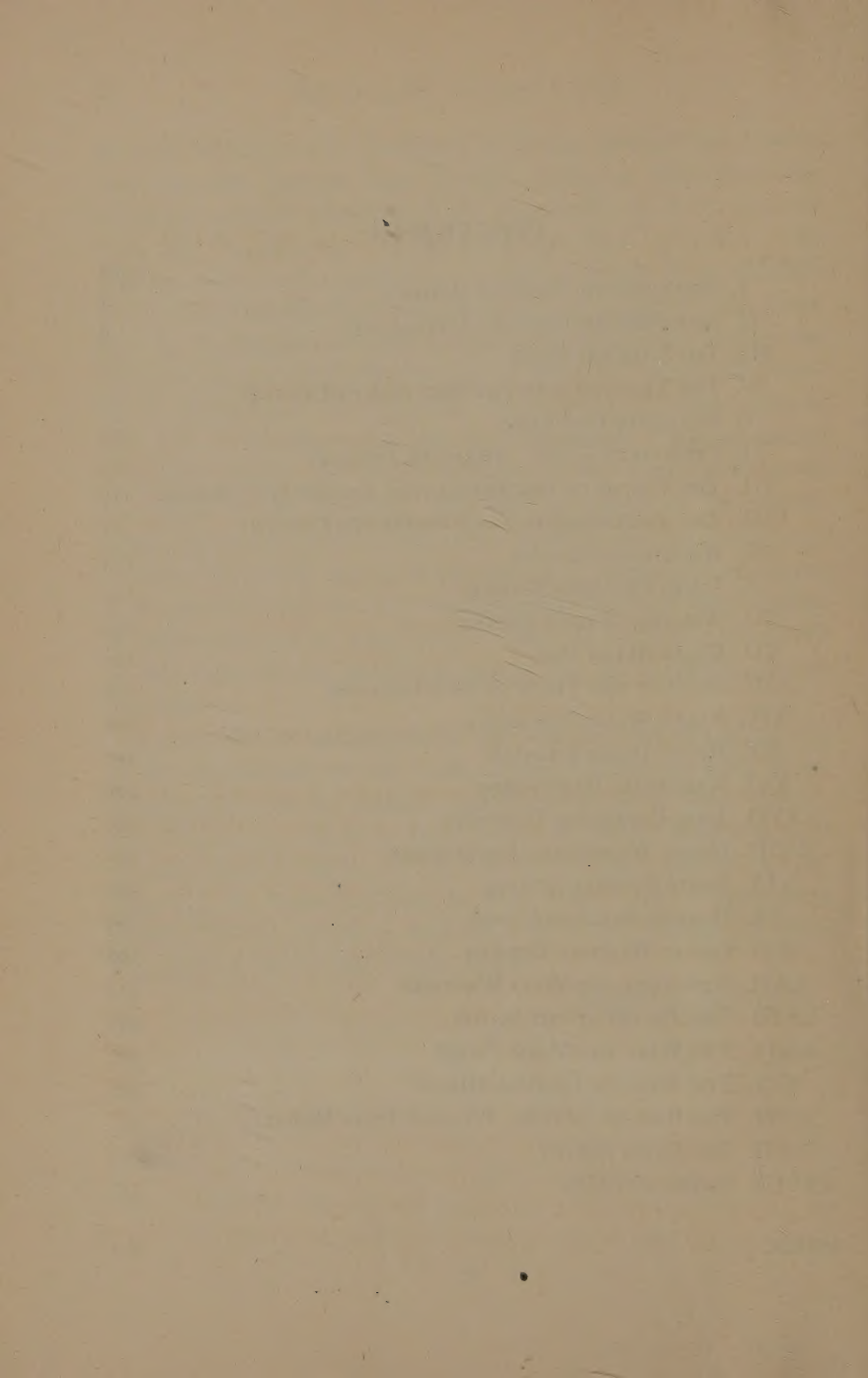
average schedule calls for twenty to twenty-five periods a week, and that any teacher may properly welcome relief from the complete original planning of all this work. It is to this end that the "machinery" of the book has been provided. The readings with each chapter are suggested rather than dictated. It stands to reason that substitutions are possible; and these may be determined not only by personal preference but by the resources of the school library or the material included in various available books of selections. In order to facilitate matters, however, a parallel book has been prepared, "Milestones in American Literature," which includes all the material listed at the heads of the chapters, with the exception of the novels. Again, the questions relative to the readings and the topics and problems for study are all in the nature of suggestion and have been supplied with the very definite idea that they are material *to depart from* or *to select from*. There is doubtless too much of this material for profitable use of all the students in any one class.

A great deal of valuable help has been secured from teachers in the preparation of the book. Several chapters were given incisive criticism by summer teacher-students at The University of Chicago; others to the number of twelve or fifteen were actually used in classes at the University High School in Chicago and the Lincoln School in New York. All of these were modified if not rewritten, and basic criticism directed at these was applied to the rest of the work.

PERCY H. BOYNTON

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# AMERICAN LITERATURE

## CHAPTER I

### SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY HISTORY

No reading list is supplied with this chapter—as with two other similar chapters, Chapters VIII and XIII—because no special reading for it could profitably be done in a school course. It is presented as a historical foreword to American colonial literature, and should be studied as such.

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

American literature transplanted from England

The English of the seventeenth century

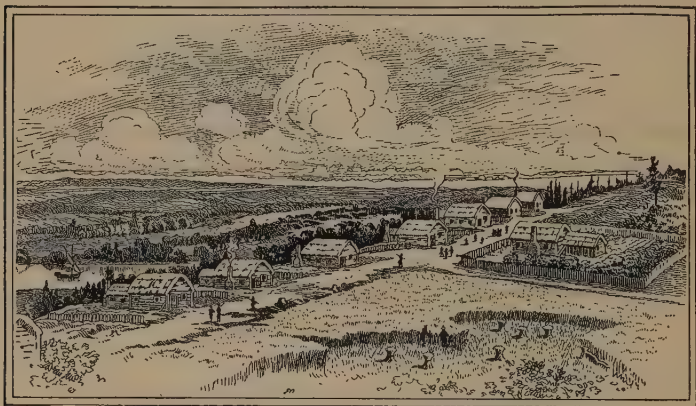
The Royalist colonists

The Puritan colonists

Tides of migration to Virginia and Massachusetts

**American literature transplanted from England.** American literature differs in its beginnings from the literatures of most other great nations, because it was a transplanted product at the start. It sprang, in a way, like Minerva, full-armed from the head of Jove—Jove in this case being England, and the armor being the inheritance of English tradition and culture which the average colonist brought with him across the Atlantic. In contrast, Greek, Roman, French, German, English, and the less familiar literatures can all be more or less successfully traced back to the earliest days of history; their primitive life was interwoven with the growth of a language and the progress of a rude civilization, and the earliest writings which have come down to us from them were not the results of authorship as we know it today. They were either folk poetry, enjoyed by the people in groups and accompanied by singing

and dancing,—like the Psalms and the simpler ballads,<sup>1</sup>—or they were the record of folk tradition, slowly and variously developed through generations and finally collected into continuous stories like the *Iliad*, the *Æneid*, the “Song of Roland,” the “Nibelungenlied,” and “Beowulf.” They were composed by word of mouth, and for years or generations they were not



PLYMOUTH IN 1622

Governor Bradford's house on the right

written down; they were not put into print until centuries after they had been copied by the monks or other scholars and had become familiar in quotation.

The one great poem-story in American literature composed in this way from old folk legend is “The Song of Hiawatha,” but this is the story of a conquered and vanishing race; it has nothing basic to do with the Americans of today; it is far less related to them than are the earlier epics<sup>2</sup> of the European

<sup>1</sup>A ballad is a short narrative poem, adapted for singing, simple in plot and metrical structure, divided into stanzas, and impersonal in tone, not expressing any feeling for or against the people about whom the ballad centers.

<sup>2</sup>An epic is a poetical account of great events carried out by heroic and sometimes supernatural characters and dealing with the national or religious interests of a people or of all mankind,

nations to whom they trace their ancestry. Except for a few place names, even the language of America owes nothing to that of the Indians, for the English tongue, itself an Old World product, is a compound of Greek and Latin and French and German. Our literary beginnings, then, go back to two groups of educated English colonists, or immigrants; and our knowledge of these beginnings, to conditions in the divided England from which they came—the one group to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, and the other to Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620.

**The English of the seventeenth century.** The English of the early seventeenth century were an eager, restless, driving people. There was an active enthusiasm for the day's doings, a kind of living assent to Hamlet's commentary on "this goodly frame, the earth, . . . this most excellent canopy, the air, . . . this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire," and to the exclamation that follows: "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!" And under a strong and tactful monarch the nation had been kept at peace with itself. The splendid reign of the greatest of England's queens was just past. The country was secure from foreign invasion and confident in its strength. Great naval leaders had brought new honors to her name; great explorers had planted her flag on mysterious and new-discovered coasts; a group of dramatists had made the theater as popular as the moving-picture house of today; poets and novelists, preachers and statesmen, scientists and scholars, were all working alertly and keenly.

Yet England was on the verge of a great and sudden change, for in this fallow soil the seeds of conflict had been stealthily taking root; and when Elizabeth was followed on the throne by the vain and unkingly James I, the crop turned out to be a harvest of dragons' teeth. Puritan democrats and cavalier Royalists fought with each other over the body of England till

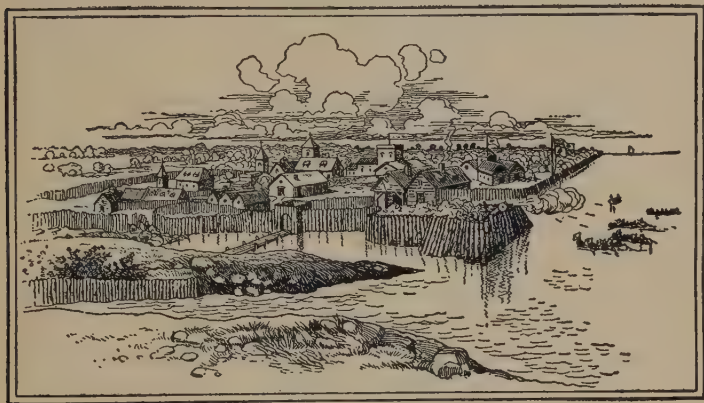


it was prostrate and helpless. Then followed the rise of Puritan power, the execution of Charles I, the establishment of the Commonwealth under the Cromwells from 1649 to 1660, and the peaceful restoration of monarchy at the latter date. It was in the mid-stages of these developments that the first settlements were made in English America. The rival factions contributed large numbers of vigorous pioneers. The Puritans were called Dissenters and Nonconformists because of their attitude toward the Established Church of England; but the Royalists who came over to America were, though loyal to the Church, simply nonconformists of another type, who preferred doing things out on the frontier to living conventional lives at home.

**The Royalist colonists.** The Royalists who came to Jamestown and the surrounding country set out, like other travelers and explorers of their day, to settle new English territory as a landed aristocracy in a series of great estates like those in the mother country. They were a mixed lot, but on the whole not an irreligious lot. They believed in the Established Church as they did in the established government, and they persecuted with a good will those who tried to observe other forms of worship than their own. They were, however, chiefly fortune-hunters, just as were the men who surged out to California in 1849 (see page 365) or those who went to Alaska fifty years later; they hoped to make their money in the West and spend it in the East, and they had little thought of literature, either as a thing to enjoy or a thing to create. When they wrote they did so to give information about the country, the Indians, and the new conditions of living, or to keep in touch with relatives, legal authorities, or sources of money supply; and always they had in mind the thought of attracting new settlers, for of all their needs their need of labor was greatest. They made no attempt at general education, adopting the theory, long held by the ruling classes, that too much knowledge would be a dangerous source of discontent among the working people. Some few accounts and descriptions were written that are interesting to the modern reader, but these were seldom true of the people as a

whole or of anything permanently American. The writers were Englishmen away from home, settling for the time in *Virgin-ia* (the province named for the virgin queen, Elizabeth), in *James-town*, in the *Carolinas* (from the Latin for "Charles"), in *Mary-land*, and, even as late as 1722, in *Georg-ia*.

**The Puritan colonists.** The Nonconformists whom adverse winds took against their will to Plymouth in 1620 were a very different folk. They were chiefly Puritan in prejudice and



JAMESTOWN IN 1622

upbringing. Many of their leaders were graduates of Cambridge University, who had become clergymen of the Church of England, only to be driven out of it because of their unchurchly preaching—born leaders who were brave enough to risk comfort and safety for conscience' sake. They came over to America in order, as Mrs. Hemans put it in her much-quoted poem, to have "freedom to worship God," but they had no intention of giving this freedom to others. They had endured so much for their religious faith that they wanted a place where this, and this only, should be tolerated. So they became, not illogically, the fiercest kind of persecutors, practicing with a vengeance the lessons they had learned in England at the cost of blood and suffering.

They settled in compact towns, where they could believe and worship together; they put up "meeting-houses," where they could listen to the preacher on the Lord's Day and where they could transact business with the same man as "moderator" on week days (see page 182). He was a controlling power—"pastor," or shepherd, and "dominie," or master, of the community. And when the meeting-houses and the jails were finished, the settlers erected as their next public buildings the schoolhouses, where the children might learn to read the Scriptures so that they could "foil the ould deluder, Satan." Furthermore, public education soon became compulsory. The Puritans' place names showed no respect for monarchy. They were either Indian—Massachusetts and Agawam; derived from England of Puritan associations, like Boston, Plymouth, and Falmouth; or quaintly Scriptural, like Marthas Vineyard, Providence, and Salem. These people, unlike the settlers in the South, came over to live and die in America. They wrote for the same social and business reasons that the Virginians did, but they also wrote much about their religion, compiled the "Bay Psalm Book," published sermons, and recorded their struggles—which began very early and were doomed to final failure—to keep their New England free from "divers religions." At first their writings were sent to England for publication, but before long, in 1639, they had their own printing-press; and the things that were printed were not so much the sayings of individual men as the opinions of the community.

**Tides of migration to Virginia and Massachusetts.** The migration of the settlers to the North and the South in the seventeenth century reflected the course of the civil war in England. Up to 1640 colonization was slow and steady in both regions. From 1640 to 1660 immigration increased rapidly in the South and declined in the North, for in those years the grip of the Puritans on the old country relieved them from persecution there, and so from the need to avoid it, and at the same time made many Royalists glad for a chance to escape to some more peaceful spot. From 1660 on, with the return of



the old Royalists to power in England, Puritan migration was once again started toward the North, and the home country was once more secure for the followers of the king. But the real characters of the two districts were unchanged. They were firmly established in the earlier years, and they have persisted clear up to the present time. The America of today is a compound in which the basic native qualities are inherited from the oldest traditions of aristocratic Virginia and the oldest traits of democratic and Puritan Massachusetts.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Who were the leaders in seventeenth-century England?
2. In what respects were the pioneer movements to Virginia and Massachusetts, to California, and to Alaska similar? In what respects were they essentially different?
3. What is meant by a landed aristocracy? In what different ways may extensive possessions be acquired? Do such aristocracies exist today? Read Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" and the latter part of Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night" for comments on English conditions in the late eighteenth century.
4. Read Mrs. Hemans's poem "The Pilgrim Fathers."
5. Mention other place names that were given in deference to English royalty; other names of Indian derivation; names borrowed from old English towns; names drawn from the Bible; names in the Mississippi Valley recording French travel and settlement; names in the Far West recording Spanish travel and settlement; names derived from other historical or literary sources. Which kind is most common in your region?
6. The following questions may be answered from the Chronological Outlines (1607-1650) at the close of Chapter IV, pp. 46-47:
  - a. What are the first two important events and dates to remember in American history after 1600?
  - b. Who was the king on the English throne at the time? Who succeeded him in 1625? How long was his reign and what ended it? What is the name of the period in English history that followed it?
  - c. What king was on the French throne? What long war was ended in Europe in 1648?
  - d. With whom were the Americans having trouble, and in what did it result?

## CHAPTER II

### SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

WILLIAM BRADFORD. Of Plimoth Plantation. 1628.

BOYNTON, P. H. Milestones in American Literature, pp. 3-8. Ginn and Company.

CAIRNS, W. B. Early American Writers, pp. 27-44. The Macmillan Company.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. Readings from American Literature, pp. 8-14. Ginn and Company.

THOMAS MORTON. The New English Canaan, Book III. 1637.

BOYNTON. Milestones, pp. 9-13.

CAIRNS. Early Writers, pp. 60-72.

In reading these two men notice the contrasting and hostile points of view. See if you get the impression that all the truth is on one side.

Read Hawthorne's "Maypole of Merry Mount," in "Twice-Told Tales" (written two centuries later), and decide how far you might have sympathized with Morton's attitude toward the Puritans.

What are the differences, suggested by Thomas Morton, between the way in which the writer of history *must* employ facts and the way in which the writer of fiction *may* use them? In what respect are their duties alike? Read the preface to Percy Mackaye's "Washington" for the interview about this between the spirit of the Theater and the Inhibitors.

NATHANIEL WARD. The Simple Cobler of Aggawam in America. 1647.

BOYNTON. Milestones, pp. 14-17.

CAIRNS. Early Writers, pp. 112-124.

CALHOUN and MACALARNEY. Readings, pp. 28-33.

Notice whether there is any natural connection between Ward's hostility to toleration, his contempt for fashionable dress, and his attitude toward the Irish.

## ROGER WILLIAMS.

Although Roger Williams is mentioned in this chapter as an influential writer in his day, no readings are assigned, because the modern school-pupil would find them too laboriously dull.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

## The earliest colonial literature

The scarcity of writings in the Royalist colonies

The Puritan belief in the "ultimate truth"

William Bradford, a Puritan historian

Thomas Morton, a satirist of Puritanism

Nathaniel Ward, a champion of Puritanism

Roger Williams, a dissenter from Puritanism

**The earliest colonial literature.** In dealing with the earliest expressions of any literature wise historians and critics are always very charitable. Rough, uncouth, fragmentary pieces are taken into account, because they serve as bridges to the remoter past. Harsh critics of American colonial literature seem to forget this practice when they rule out of court everything produced in this country before the days of Irving and Cooper. A great deal of the early writing should, of course, be used only as source material for the historian; but some of it has the same claim to attention as the old chronicles, plays, and ballads in English literary history. It deserves study if it portrays, or criticizes, or even unconsciously reflects, the life and thought of the times, and it is properly regarded as American if in form or content or point of view it clearly belongs to this side of the Atlantic.

**The scarcity of writings in the Royalist colonies.** The nature of settlement and the neglect of popular education in the South resulted in so little authorship in the colonial times that in any brief survey the Southern writers hardly come into view before the nineteenth century. Their narratives and descriptions of colonial life, as long as they wrote them at all, were quite like most of the earliest Northern writings of the sort.



The one outstanding difference is that they did not make so much of religion and the belief in a personal Providence as the Puritans did. Thus, when John Smith at Jamestown was content with the general phrase "it pleased God," Anthony Thacher, saved from shipwreck in Boston Harbor, wrote devoutly, "the Lord directed my toes into a crevice in the rock"; and where Smith's companions hoped for the general blessing of God, Thacher's fellow worshipers were perfectly certain that every step they took was foreordained by the Most High, so that even their apparent misfortunes were his punishments for misconduct.

**The Puritan belief in the "ultimate truth."** In all the great mass of Puritan writings in the first century of residence in America one definite current appears, and that is the quiet but irresistible current of change in human thought. The Puritans had made the profound but constantly repeated mistake of assuming that after thousands of years of groping by mankind they alone had at last discovered the "ultimate truth," and that for the rest of time men need do nothing but follow the precepts that God had revealed to them about life here and life hereafter. They were, in their own serious way, happy in their confident possession of truth<sup>1</sup> and sternly resolved to bestow it, or, if necessary, impose it, on all whom they could control. Their failure was recorded with their earliest attempts, and it came, not because of their particular weakness or the strength of their particular adversaries, but because they were trying to obstruct the progress of human thought, which is as irresistible as any other force of nature. They might as well have entered into an argument with gravitation or the sunrise. The fact is, if one stop to think but a moment, that truth naturally is unchanging,

<sup>1</sup> A truth is a general statement about mankind and man's surroundings that may be applied to any number of separate cases. In distinction from this, a fact is a particular statement about one case or one set of cases. Thus it is a truth that a whole is equal to the sum of its parts. It may be a fact about a given whole—a measured bushel, for instance—that it is made up of three lots of seven, eleven, and fourteen quarts.

but that man's understanding of the truth changes as the progress of science and the alterations in social and industrial and international life create new problems and new solutions. Yet the most interesting and the best-written pieces of seventeenth-century New England literature all reveal the Puritans' vain effort to hold back the steadily rising tide of human thought.

William Bradford, a Puritan historian (1590–1657). The Puritanism against which this rising tide of dissent crept in



THE MAYFLOWER IN PLYMOUTH HARBOR

was admirably embodied in William Bradford, the *Mayflower* Pilgrim, who was more than thirty times governor of his colony and the author of a history of Plymouth Plantation. He was a brave, sober, devout leader and stanchly loyal to his religious sect. His history and his detailed journal of the first year in America are clearly and sometimes finely written and give ample proof of his stalwart character—"fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"; and they are free from the personal narrowness which is often mistakenly charged against all Puritans. His account, for example, of the reasons for the Pilgrims' departure from Leyden tells of the hardships they had endured there, the oncoming of old age, the effects on the children of living among

foreigners, and, lastly, the great hope they cherished of advancing the Church of Christ in some remote part of the world. It recounts many of the objections advanced against attempting settlement in America and concludes :

It was answered, that all great and honorable actions are accompanied with great difficulties, and must be both enterprised and overcome with answerable courages. It was granted the dangers were great, but not desperate ; the difficulties were many, but not invincible. For though there were many of them likely, yet they were not certain ; it might be sundry of the things feared might never befall ; others, by provident care and the use of good means, might in a great measure be prevented ; and all of them, through the help of God, by fortitude and patience, might either be borne or overcome. True it was, that such attempts were not to be made and undertaken without good ground and reason ; not rashly or lightly, as many have done for curiosity or hope of gain, etc. But their condition was not ordinary ; their ends were good and honorable ; their calling lawful and urgent ; and therefore they might expect the blessing of God in their proceeding. Yea, though they should lose their lives in this action, yet might they have comfort in the same, and their endeavors would be honorable.

Unhappily this heroic trait of Puritanism was coupled with a desperate religious harshness which the world is even yet slow to forgive.

**Thomas Morton, a satirist of Puritanism (1590?–1646).** One of the earliest local dissenters was Thomas Morton, author of the "New English Canaan," published in Amsterdam in 1637. It is a half-pathetic fact that this should stand out today as the most striking thing written in its decade in America, for the third book, which is quite the best of it, is a biting satire<sup>1</sup> on the Puritans in Massachusetts. Morton, it is needless to say, was not a Puritan himself. He was a restless, dishonest, unscrupulous gentleman-adventurer from London, who gave the

<sup>1</sup> A satire is a kind of composition, in prose or verse, in which vice, folly, insincerity, inefficiency, stupidity, or other defects are held up to ridicule.

major part of his life to fighting the Puritans on their own grounds. He set up a fur-trading post at "Merry Mount" just southeast of Boston, sold the Indians liquor and firearms, made friends with their women, and in wanton mockery erected a Maypole there and taught the Indians the English games and dances which were particularly offensive to the grave residents of Plymouth and Boston. If he had not written his book he



THE MAYPOLE OF MERRY MOUNT

would be remembered now only as one of the chief trouble-makers whom the Puritans had to fight down; but he did them more damage with his pen than with all his active misbehavior. He undermined their influence by not treating them soberly; he made fun of their costume, derided their speech, ridiculed their religious formalities, and held the valiant Miles Standish up to scorn by nicknaming him "Captain Shrimp." He went further and questioned their motives and their honesty, their integrity in business, and their sincerity in religion. In a great deal of what he wrote about them he was scandalously unfair; he should never be accepted as an authority on any statement unless supported by some other writer of his day. Yet under-



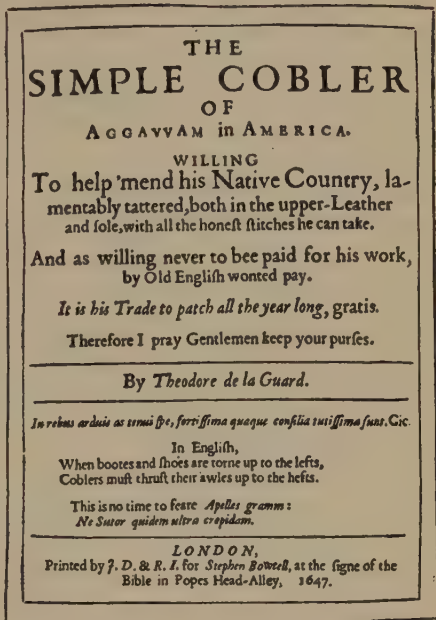
neath all his clever abuse of the Puritans and their ways there is an evident basis of fact, as is shown by the sober study of history. Although the Puritans were brave, strong, self-denying servants of the stern God whom they worshiped, they were usually self-righteous, sometimes cruelly vengeful, and all too often so eager to achieve His ends on earth that they were careless as to the means they took. At the very beginning of their life in America, Thomas Morton held these characteristics up to public scorn; and in so doing he made his book an omen of the long, losing battle they were destined to fight. Morton's effectiveness as a writer lies in the fact that however ill-behaved he may have been, he was attractively—maybe dangerously—genial in character. He was in truth a "cheerful liar"; but he lied like the writer of fiction who disregards the exact facts because he is telling a good story as well as he can, and because that good story is based on real life.

**Nathaniel Ward, a champion of Puritanism (1578-1652 ?).** The next New Englander to give proof that the Puritans were not having an easy time in their new English Canaan was Nathaniel Ward, author of "The Simple Cobbler of Aggawam." In character and convictions he was as different from Morton as a man could be. When he wrote this book, which was published in London in 1647, he was an excitable old Puritan who had suffered much for his faith and was still fighting for it, although near his threescore years and ten. He had been graduated at Cambridge University, had become a clergyman in the Church of England, had been hounded there for his liberality, had come to America, and had served a pastorate at Agawam (now Ipswich), Massachusetts. He had withdrawn on account of ill health, but later had served the state so well that he had been granted six hundred acres as a reward and had lived on them until his return to England at the age of seventy. He believed fiercely in the rightness of the Puritan doctrines and in the wickedness of any lapse from their precepts; so that his book was a valiant protest against any relaxation by the faithful. It was written about conditions in England, but it was composed after

fifteen years' life in America and showed how disturbed he was at the state of affairs in the new country as well as in the old.

The book is a strange compound. In thought it is the work of an alarmed and conservative old man, but in form and literary style it is vigorous, jaunty, and amusing. The full title is "The Simple Cöbler of Aggawam in America; willing to help mend his Native Country, lamentably tattered, both in the upper-Leather and sole, with all the honest stitches he can take. And as willing never to be paid for his work by Old English wonted pay. It is his Trade to patch all the year long, gratis. Therefore I Pray Gentlemen keep your Purses." He feared all new ideas; but, most of all, the doctrine that men should enjoy freedom of opinion.

On certain general ideas common opinions have been reached as to the ways people should behave together and the obligations that they owe each other. And in any region where a man stands in open disagreement with the majority he is likely to be regarded as unbalanced and to be in danger of direct or indirect persecution (see page 141). These agreements are not world-wide; they differ, for example, in Hongkong, Constantinople, and New York. Yet in each region there is a general consent on such matters as the theory of property, or the treasure vault; the theory of the State, or the flag; and the



TITLE-PAGE OF "THE SIMPLE COBLER"

theory of religion, or the altar. On all these points Nathaniel Ward was sensitive, but he was particularly so as to religious toleration, which he treats of at the outset. "Let all the wits under the heaven lay their heads together and find an Assertion worse than this and I will Petition to be chosen the universal Ideot of the World." "Since I knew what to fear, my timorous heart hath dreaded three things: a blazing Star appearing in the Air [see page 36]; a State Comet, I mean a favourite, rising in a kingdom; a new Opinion spreading in Religion."

The second section of the book is devoted to fashion in dress, an ever-green subject for the satirist. Ward's attitude toward woman as an inferior creature was almost barbaric, and apparently he would have liked it better if the "bullymong dross-sock" had dressed with the simplicity of a barbaric woman. As it was, he felt that the lady of fashion was "the very gizzard of a trifle, the product of a quarter of a cypher, the epitome of Nothing"; and he had an equal contempt for tailors who "spend their lives in making fiddle-cases for futulous Women's phansies; which are the very pettitoes of Infirmary, the giblets of perquisquilian toys."

The remainder of the work is given to a discussion of English affairs of State, written with the same aggressive positiveness. The most interesting bit of it is the portion which proclaims his belief in savage oppression of the Irish, summing up the unhappy policy which resulted in making the history of Ireland so lamentable a story up to the present time. What the old clergyman wrote is striking at points because it seems so timely. But Ward was never up-to-date in the sense of being a leader or a prophet. The things he said that apply to the twentieth century apply either because, like the question of extravagance in dress, the topic is always a fruitful one or because, like the Irish problem, matters which should long ago have been settled were allowed for centuries to confuse and complicate life. Yet Ward wrote with odd and striking effectiveness; and his book is one of the best surviving records of the Puritan attempt to thwart and obstruct the progress of human thinking.

**Roger Williams, a dissenter from Puritanism (1604-1683).** Toward the middle of the century a younger and equally vigorous man, Roger Williams, made the first notable attack by a churchman on the custom of persecuting dissenters, or holders of "divers opinions." Williams, before he was forty years old, had been thrown out of two church establishments—first in Protestant England and then in Puritan Massachusetts. He represented what Edmund Burke termed the very "dissidence of dissent." And now in a long and laborious argument, lasting from 1644 to 1652, he fought out the issue with the Reverend John Cotton. An English prisoner in Newgate, assailing persecution for cause of conscience, had been answered by John Cotton. Then followed Williams's "Bloody Tenent of Persecution for cause of Conscience, discussed in a Conference between Truth and Peace" (1644); Cotton's reply, "The Bloudy Tenent, Washed, And made white in the Bloud of the Lamb" (1647); and Williams's rejoinder, "The Bloody Tenent yet More Bloody; by Mr. Cotton's endeavour to wash it white in the Blood of the Lambe" (1652). What these two reverend gentlemen did was to set their literal English minds to work at expounding passages from the Bible that were full of the poetry of the Orient. It was, all things considered, rather less reasonable than it would have been for the spokesmen of England and Germany in 1915 to base an argument about the freedom of the seas on definite quotations from Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner."

The chief grounds of offense in the views of Roger Williams were that he asserted two things that have become axiomatic today, and two more that will be admitted by every thoughtful and honest person. The first two were that religion should not be professed by those who do not believe it in their hearts, and that the power of the magistrates extends to the bodies and the properties of the subjects, but not to their religious convictions. The second two were that America belonged to the Indians and not to the king of England, and that the Established Church was necessarily corrupt. By this last he meant simply that any



human organization which enjoys complete authority, and does not fear either competition or overthrow by public opinion, is certain to decay from within. It was the idea beneath Tennyson's lines:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Yet these opinions, preached and practiced by Williams, resulted in his being expelled from the community. The attempt was made to send him back to England, but he managed to get a permanent foothold in Rhode Island, where he opposed the still more liberal Quakers almost as violently as the churchmen of Old and New England had opposed him. To his credit, however, it can be said that he did not attempt to use the power of the courts against them. In action as well as in belief he marked the progress of liberal thought.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Mention examples of American literature written recently that definitely portray some side of American life; that criticize some aspect of American life; that unintentionally reflect it. Remember that these things may be done in fiction, drama, poetry, or the essay.

2. What sorts of changes have been taking place during the present generation in social, industrial, and international life? What sorts of pressure and discipline have been exerted on individuals and groups who differed from the controlling majorities?

3. What are some of the charges brought against Puritanism by objectors today? Read what H. L. Mencken states, for example, on Puritanism in American life in his "Book of Prefaces." What illustrations can you give in support of his contention? What in refutation? What are some of the elements of strength in American character which may be called Puritan?

4. The Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapter IV will be of assistance in answering the following questions:

a. Of the four men most discussed in this chapter, how many were born in America? how many died in America?

*b.* In the twenty years between 1630 and 1650 name one piece of writing that each was engaged in, and give place of publication of two of the four.

*c.* How many years earlier had Shakespeare died? What great poet succeeded him?

*d.* What work of Milton's was published in this period?

*e.* After Roger Williams was expelled from his Puritan community, what did he do by which he is remembered?

*f.* What other cities and states were founded during this time? What college was founded?

*g.* What event took place that is important in the history of publishing in this country?

# CHAPTER III

## THE EARLIEST VERSE

### SUGGESTED READINGS

THE BAY PSALM BOOK. 1640.

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 18-21. Ginn and Company.

CAIRNS, W. B. *Early American Writers*, pp. 73-81. The Macmillan Company.

MICHAEL WIGGLESWORTH. *The Day of Doom*. 1662.

BOYNTON. *Milestones*, pp. 22-27.

CAIRNS. *Early Writers*, pp. 165-177.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 47-51. Ginn and Company.

ANNE BRADSTREET. *The Tenth Muse lately sprung up in America*. 1650. *Contemplations*. 1678.

BOYNTON. *Milestones*, pp. 28-33.

CAIRNS. *Early Writers*, pp. 143-164.

CALHOUN and MACALARNEY. *Readings*, pp. 33-39.

What is there in the meter of "The Day of Doom" that is poetically undignified? Select and bring to class a passage of poetry that is light and jolly in form and content, and another that is stately in both respects.

What do you notice of interest in the list of sinners in "The Day of Doom?" What is the general difference between the sinners referred to by Wigglesworth in "The Day of Doom" and those mentioned by Bryant in "A Hymn to Death," ll. 33-114?

In what respects is the form of Anne Bradstreet's "Contemplations" well adapted to the mood and content of the poem?

Compare the ideas of God and nature in "Contemplations" with those in Bryant's "Thanatopsis."

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Puritans not hostile to all verse-writing

The "Bay Psalm Book"

Michael Wigglesworth—his life

"The Day of Doom" and its contents

The reasons for its form

The reasons for its popularity

Anne Bradstreet—her life

The "quarternions"

"Contemplations"

Her defense of womankind

**The Puritans not hostile to all verse-writing.** Although it is generally said of the Puritans that they were openly hostile to all the arts, there is plenty of proof that they felt a liking for verse and that very many of them were inclined to try their hands at it. Their memorial verses, sometimes of the most intricate and ingenious sorts, survive in print and in stone. There is less verse sprinkled through the cavalier Morton's "Canaan" than there is in the Puritan Ward's "Cobler." The old conservative never wrote more wisely than in this so-called "song":

They seldom lose the field, but often win,  
Who end their Warres, before their Warres begin.

Their cause is oft the worse, that first begin,  
And they may lose the field, the field that win.

In Civil Warres 'twixt Subjects and their King,  
There is no conquest got, by conquering.

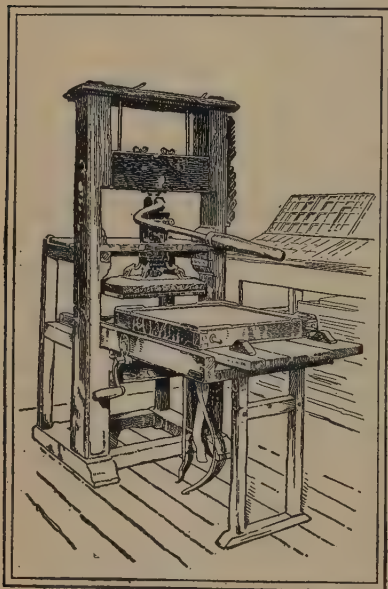
Warre ill begun, the onely way to mend,  
Is t'end the Warre before the Warre do end.

They that will end ill Warres, must have the skill  
To make an end by Rule, and not by Will.

In ending Warres 'tween Subjects and their Kings,  
Great things are sav'd by losing little things.



The "Bay Psalm Book." The first whole volume in English printed in the Western Hemisphere (printing of Spanish books in Mexico had begun a hundred years before) was the "Bay Psalm Book," Cambridge, 1640. This was a painstaking attempt of three eminent clergymen to put the Psalms into verse



EARLY NEW ENGLAND PRINTING PRESS

form for use in public worship. The worst passages—and there are some very bad ones—are all too often quoted in proof of the statement that the Puritans were unable either to compose or to appreciate good verse. And this in spite of the often-quoted and charmingly written prose comment in the editors' preface:

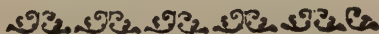
If therefore the verses are not alwayes so smooth and elegant as some may desire or expect; let them consider that Gods Altar needs not our pollishings: Ex. 20. for wee have respected rather a plaine translation, then to smooth our verses with the sweetnes of any paraphrase, and soe have attended Conscience rather then Elegance, fidelity rather than poetry, in translating the hebrew words into english language, and Davids poetry into english meetre; that soe we may sing in Sion the Lords songs of prayse according to his owne will; untill hee take us from hence, and wipe away all our teares, & bid us enter into our masters joye to sing eternall Halleluiahs.

Michael Wigglesworth—his life (1631–1705). Moreover, some historians seem to enjoy quoting awkward and ugly passages from "The Day of Doom," by Michael Wigglesworth, as

PSALM Cvi, Cvi.

into captivitee.

- 47 Save us, o Lord our God, & us  
from heathens gath'ring rayse  
to give thanks to thy Holy-Name:  
to triumph in thy prayse.  
48 The Lord the God of Israell  
from aye to aye blest bee:  
and let all people say Amen.  
o prayse Iehovah yee.
- 



THE

FIFT BOOKE

Psalme. 107.

**O** Give yee thanks unto the Lord,  
because that good is hee:  
because his loving kindenes lasts  
to perpetuitee.

- 2 So let the Lords redeem'd say: whom  
hee freed from th'emies hands:  
3 And gathred them from East, & West,  
from South, & Northerne lands.  
4 I'th desart, in a desart way  
they wandred: no towne finde,  
5 to dwell in. Hungry & thirsty:  
their soule within them pinde.  
Then did they to Iehovah cry  
when they were in distresse:  
who did them set at liberty

added proof that the Puritans were never able to write anything that deserved the name of poetry. It must be admitted that this grave and pretentious piece of work was hardly more lovely than the name of the author. Wigglesworth was a devoted Puritan who came to America at the age of seven; graduated from Harvard College; qualified himself to practice medicine; and then became a preacher, serving, with intermissions of ill health, as pastor in Malden, Massachusetts, from 1657 until his death in 1705. He was a gentle, kindly minister, unfailing in his care for both the bodies and the souls of his parishioners.

**"The Day of Doom" and its contents.** He had the instinct for verse-writing which was common among the men of his time, but instead of venting it merely in the composing of intricate short poems and epitaphs, as most of his fellow writers did, he dedicated it to the Lord in the writing of a sort of rimed sermon on the subject of the Day of Judgment. The full title reads, "The Day of Doom or, a Description Of the Great and Last Judgment with a short discourse about Eternity. Eccles. 12, 14. For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." It was printed, probably in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1662.

The poem is composed of two hundred and twenty-four eight-line stanzas. After an invocation and the announcement of the Day of Doom, the dead come from their graves and up to the throne of Christ. Then the "sheep" whom the Judge has chosen for salvation from eternal torture are placed on the right, and the wicked "goats" are summoned in groups to hear the verdicts of the Judge. These sinners include in turn hypocrites, civil, honest men, those who died in youth before they were converted, those who were misled by the example of the good, those who did not understand the Bible, those who feared martyrdom more than hell-torment, those who thought that salvation was hopeless, and, finally, those who died as babes. All are sternly answered from the throne, and all are swept off to a common eternal doom except the infants, for whom is reserved "the easiest room in hell."

**The reasons for its form.** Two facts should be remembered in criticizing the "Day of Doom" as poetry. The first is that Wigglesworth wrote it intentionally as a teacher and a preacher and not as a poet, in which respect he was like the compilers of the "Bay Psalm Book." In his introduction he said:

Reader, I am a fool  
And have adventurèd  
To play the fool this once for Christ,  
The more his fame to spread.  
If this my foolishness  
Help thee to be more wise,  
I have attainèd what I seek,  
And what I only prize.

The second point is that in writing a rimed sermon for Christian worshipers he had a model supplied him in this same book of psalmody, which had appeared some twenty years before and which was familiar to all the people who were likely to be his readers. The translators of the 121st Psalm wrote, for example:

I to the hills lift up mine eyes,  
from whence shall come mine aid,  
Mine help shall from Jehovah come,  
which heav'n and earth hath made.

And Wigglesworth took up the rhythm with

No heart so bold, but now grows cold,  
and almost dead with fear;  
No eye so dry but now can cry,  
and pour out many a tear.

To any modern reader this light-footed meter seems utterly unsuited to so grave a subject, and the whole Puritan idea of the Day of Doom seems so unnatural as to be amusing. But Wigglesworth was trying to write a rimed summary of what everybody thought, in a meter with which everybody was familiar, and he was unqualifiedly successful.



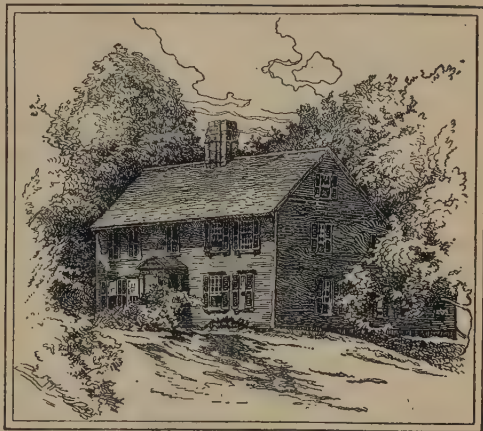
A final verdict on Michael Wigglesworth is often pronounced on the basis of this one poem, or, at best, the worst of his remaining work is quoted to prove that he and all Puritan preachers were clumsy and prosy verse-writers. Yet in the never-quoted passage immediately following the "Day of Doom"—a poem without a title, on the vanity of human wishes—Michael Wigglesworth gave proofs of human kindness and of poetic power. In these earnest lines Wigglesworth showed a mastery of fluent verse, a control of poetic imagery, and a gentle yearning for the welfare of his parishioners' souls, which is the utterance of the pastor rather than of the theologian. For a moment God ceases to be angry, Christ stands pleading without the gate, and the good pastor utters a poem upon the neglected theme "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you":

Fear your great Maker with a child-like awe,  
Believe his Grace, love and obey his Law.  
This is the total work of man, and this  
Will crown you here with Peace and there with Bliss.

The reasons for its popularity. "The Day of Doom," however, was far more popular than the better poetry that Wigglesworth wrote at other times. It was the most popular book of the century in America. It is said that one copy was sold for every thirty-five persons in New England. People memorized its easy, jingling meter just as they might have memorized ballads or, at a later day, Mother Goose rimes; and the grim description became "the solace," as Lowell says, "of every fireside, the flicker of the pine-knots by which it was conned perhaps adding a livelier relish to its premonitions of eternal combustion." The popularity of the "Day of Doom" shows that in the very years when the Royalists were returning to power in England (see page 7) the Puritans were greatly in the majority in New England. The reaction marked by Morton and Roger Williams was only beginning. Moreover, if it had been the only "poetry" of the period, we should have to admit that the Puritans were almost hopelessly unpoetical.

**Anne Bradstreet**—her life (1612–1672). Anne Bradstreet proves the contrary, and in doing so she proves how the love of beauty can manage to bloom under the bleakest skies. Her talent was assuredly a “flower in a crannied wall.” She was born in England in 1612, and was married at the age of sixteen, as girls often were in those days, to a man several years older.

In 1630 she came to Massachusetts with her husband, Simon Bradstreet, and her father. Both became eminent in the affairs of the colony. In the home they were doubtless sober and probably dull. Mrs. Bradstreet kept house under pioneer conditions in one place after another, and when still under forty



THE BRADSTREET HOUSE IN ANDOVER

years of age had become the mother of eight children. Yet somewhere in the quiet moments of her crowded days—and one can imagine how far apart those moments must have been—she put into verse “a complete discourse and description of the four elements, constitutions, ages of man, seasons of the year; together with an exact epitome of the four monarchies, viz., the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, Roman [this means five long poems—not two]; also a dialogue between old England and New concerning the late troubles; with divers other pleasant and serious poems.” All these she wrote without apparent thought of publication, for the purely artistic reason that she enjoyed writing them; and in 1650—halfway between the “Bay Psalm Book” and the “Day of Doom”—they were taken over to London by

a friend and there put into print as the work of "The Tenth Muse lately sprung up in America."

The "quarternions." Poetry was more than a diversion for Anne Bradstreet; it must have been a passion. As a girl she had been allowed to read in the library of the Puritan Earl of Lincoln, over whose estate her father was steward. And here



ANNE BRADSTREET

she had fallen under the spell of the lesser poets of her age, though naturally not of the dramatists, whom the Puritans opposed. So, after their fashion,—and particularly in the fashion of a Frenchman, Du Bartas, whose works were popular in an English translation,—she wrote her quaint "quarternions," or poems on the four elements, the four seasons, the four ages, and the four "humours," and capped them all with the four monarchies. These are interesting to the modern reader only as examples of how the

human mind used to work. Chaucer had made ingenious use of the same materials; Ben Jonson had been fascinated with them. It was a literary tradition to develop them one by one, to set them in debate against each other, and to interweave them into corresponding groups: childhood, water, winter, phlegm; youth, air, spring, blood; manhood, fire, summer, choler; and old age, earth, autumn, melancholy.

"Contemplations." Yet her chief claim on our interest is founded on the shorter poems, in which she took least pride. In these she showed her real command of word and measure to express poetic thought. Her "Contemplations," for example, is as poetic in thought as Bryant's "Thanatopsis," to which it

stands in suggestive contrast (see page 147). Both of these are on the idea that nature endures but man passes away. This thought was never long absent from the Puritan mind, but when it came to the ordinary Puritan it was likely to be cast into homely and prosaic verse, as in the epitaph :

The path of death it must be trod  
By them that wish to walk with God.

Anne Bradstreet on the same theme wrote with noble dignity :

O Time the fatal wrack of mortal things,  
That draws oblivions curtain over kings,  
Their sumptuous monuments, men know them not,  
Their names without a Record are forgot,  
Their parts, their ports, their pomp's all laid in th' dust  
Nor wit, nor gold, nor buildings, scape time's rust ;  
But he whose name is grav'd in the white stone  
Shall last and shine when all of these are gone.

**Her defense of womankind.** Yet only one part of her work was done in a strictly Puritan vein. She was even more interesting as an early champion of womankind. She did not go so far as to assert that the sexes were equal ; that was too far in advance of the age for her imagination. But she did contend that women should be given credit for whatever was worth "small praise." This idea appears again and again in her shorter poems.

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are  
Men have precendency and still excell,  
It is but vain unjustly to wage warre ;  
Men can do best, and women know it well ;  
Preheminence in all and each is yours ;  
Yet grant some small acknowledgment of ours.

Naturally she was full of pride in the achievements of Queen Elizabeth, a pride which she expressed in a fine song "In Honour of that High and Mighty Princess."



From all the Kings on earth she won the prize.  
 Nor say I more then duly is her due,  
 Millions will testifie that this is true.  
 She hath wip'd off th'aspersion of her Sex,  
 That women wisdom lack to play the Rex:  
 Spains Monarch, sayes not so, nor yet his host:  
 She taught them better manners, to their cost.  
 The Salique law, in force now had not been,  
 If France had ever hop'd for such a Queen.  
 But can you Doctors now this point dispute,  
 She's Argument enough to make you mute.  
 Since first the sun did run his nere run race,  
 And earth had once a year, a new old face,  
 Since time was time, and man unmanly man,  
 Come shew me such a *Phoenix* if you can?

Then follows a recital of Queen Elizabeth's proudest triumphs, assertions of how far she surpassed Tomris, Dido, Cleopatra, Zenobya, and the conclusion:

Now say, have women worth? or have they none?  
 Or had they some, but with our Queen is't gone?  
 Nay Masculines, you have thus taxt us long,  
 But she, though dead, will vindicate our wrong.  
 Let such as say our Sex is void of Reason,  
 Know tis a Slander now, but once was Treason.

Anne Bradstreet foreshadowed the "woman's movement" of today by two full centuries, and thus showed how even the daughter of one Puritan governor of Massachusetts and the wife of another could be thinking and aspiring far in advance of her times.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What is the distinction between verse and poetry? Are the verses from Ward, quoted in the first paragraph, poetry?
2. To what civil war do the verses quoted refer? Can you make any definite application of any of the references?

3. What did the editors of the "Bay Psalm Book" explain in the quoted preface as their main purpose in preparing and publishing their translation? Is it fair to describe this purpose as especially Puritan?

4. What facts about the intention and the form of the "Day of Doom" should temper one's criticism of it as poetry? Was this, as poetry, the best of Wigglesworth's writing?

5. What were the "quaternions" of Anne Bradstreet? What were the favorite "sets of four" used by herself and other poets?

6. During what period have the greatest changes taken place in the position of woman in the world? Aside from the evident gain in political standing, what developments have taken place in education and in business and professional life?

7. Information on the following questions may be obtained from the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapter IV:

a. In what year was the "Bay Psalm Book" published? Where?

b. How many years earlier was the first printing-press in America set up? Where?

c. Name two other books by American authors which were published within a decade inclosing the year in which the "Bay Psalm Book" was published.

d. What important event took place in England in 1649? How did it affect colonization in America? Why?

e. What were the names of the four colonies of New England that united in 1643? What was this union called?

f. When and where was Anne Bradstreet's book of poems published? When was the "Day of Doom" published?

g. What is the name for most of the intervening period in English history? Does this explain the popularity of the latter book with any of the English reading-public?

h. Who is the most prominent English man of letters who was writing during that time? What was the greatest work published?

i. Who was the head of the English government from 1653 to 1658? In what year were the Royalists restored to power? What was the effect on emigration from England?

j. What colonies were founded in America between 1650 and 1670?

k. What indications are there that science was progressing in the world? in what countries particularly?

l. What famous work by a naturalist was published during the period of the English Commonwealth?

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TRANSITION TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

INCREASE MATHER. An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences. 1684.

COTTON MATHER. The Wonders of the Invisible World (1693); *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702).

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 34-40. Ginn and Company.

CAIRNS, W. B. *Early American Writers*, pp. 199-237. The Macmillan Company.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 59-66. Ginn and Company.

What traces do you find in these works of superstitions based on Bible authority? What ideas based on popular superstition?

SAMUEL SEWALL. *Diary* (from 1673 to 1729). (Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll., Ser. 5, Vols. VI-VIII.)

BOYNTON, *Milestones*, pp. 41-44.

CAIRNS. *Early Writers*, pp. 238-251.

CALHOUN and MACALARNEY. *Readings*, pp. 66-74.

The best method of approaching Samuel Sewall's *Diary* is to read a number of pages for the references to some definite topic. This may best be selected from promising suggestions in the first few pages of reading. If none appears, look for any of the following or others like them: Sunday observance; funerals, weddings, and christenings; the pastor and his people; holidays; parents and children; self-analysis; religious discipline; law and order. Comparisons on a given topic with the entries for the same period in Evelyn's *Diary* or with an equal number of pages in Pepys are fruitful.

SARAH KEMBLE KNIGHT. *Journals of Madame Knight* (written in 1704).

BOYNTON. *Milestones*, pp. 45-49.

Why should Mrs. Knight's quotations and allusions to Bible passages have been offensive to orthodox Christians of her day? Is there good reason for this?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- The losing of control by the churchmen in New England
- The conservatism of Increase and Cotton Mather : their lives
  - The alliance of superstition with religion
  - Increase Mather's "Illustrious Providences"
  - Cotton Mather's "Magnalia"
- The open-mindedness of Samuel Sewall: his life
  - His Diary as a record of events
  - His Diary as a revelation of Sewall's mind
- The silent unorthodoxy of Sarah Kemble Knight
  - Her "Journal of a Journey from Boston to New York"
- Summary

**The losing of control by the churchmen in New England.** As the end of the seventeenth century approached, although the population of New England was still overwhelmingly Puritan, the churchmen were slowly and reluctantly losing grip on the government of the colonies. Government in America has always in its broadest aspects reflected the will of the people. If lawmakers and law-enforcers have been vicious, it has been because the majority of the people have not cared to insist on the choice of good men; and if stupid and blundering laws have been passed, it has been because the people have not been wide-awake enough to analyze them. On the other hand, out-of-date laws have often become "dead letters" because the majority wanted to have them ignored; and new legislation has been forced on lawmaking bodies by public opinion.

Now the Puritan settlement of New England had been a fruit of the Puritan uprising in old England, and this uprising had been a democratic movement by a people who wanted to have a hand in their own government. It was a religious movement, because in England Church and State are one and because the oppression in religious matters had been particularly offensive. As a result there was a similar movement in the democracy on this side of the Atlantic. American colonists, with a highly developed sense of justice, resented the misrule of a bad royal governor like Andros and were able to force his withdrawal;



and they resented unreasonable domination by the clergy and were independent enough to shake it off.

Between 1690 and 1700 Harvard College became for the first time something more than a training-school for preachers; the right to vote in Boston was made to depend on moral character and property ownership instead of on membership in the church; and, in the midst of the Salem witch-trials, judges and



HARVARD COLLEGE IN 1726

grand-jurymen caught their balance and refused any longer to carry on a persecution based on superstition and religious prejudice. The passage to the eighteenth century was therefore a time of marked change in common thinking; and the change is clearly recorded in the literary writings of the old-line conservatives<sup>1</sup> Cotton and Increase Mather, in the Diary of Samuel Sewall, who was able to see the light and to change slowly with

<sup>1</sup>A conservative is one who wishes to maintain conditions as they are and is inclined to suspect and fear, if not actually to resist, all change.

A liberal is one who admits that present conditions are marred by many defects, who assumes that conditions can be improved, and who wishes to seek improvement and at the same time to "hold fast to that which is good."

A radical is one who asserts that present conditions are wrong to their very roots, who wants, therefore, not to correct present conditions but to overthrow them and make a new beginning.

his generation, and in the *Journal of Sarah Kemble Knight*, who, like hundreds of other well-behaved and respectable people, was a good deal more liberal than she ever confessed in public.

**Increase Mather (1639-1723) and Cotton Mather (1663-1728): their lives.** The Mathers, Increase and Cotton, were the second and third of a succession of four members of one family line who were so popular and influential as to deserve the nickname which is sometimes given them of the "Mather Dynasty." These two were both born in America, educated in Boston and at Harvard, and made church leaders while still young men. In age they were only twenty-four years apart, and from 1682 to 1723 they worked together to uphold and increase the power of the Church in New England. Because of their prominence as preachers they inherited the "good will" which had belonged to their greatest predecessors, and by their own industry, learning, eloquence, and general vigor they added to their churchly influence like skillful business men. Their congregations were large and respectfully attentive; scores of their sermons were reprinted by request; on all public occasions and in all public discussions they were at the forefront. Increase was honored with several important posts, including the presidency of Harvard; his son Cotton, though not an officeholder, was the virtual head of the conservative party in the colony. They were great popular favorites, and in the end they suffered the fate of many another popular favorite. For the deference which was paid to them year after year made them vain and domineering; they talked too much and too long and too confidently, and they made the mistakes of judgment which men who talk all the time are bound to make. When Increase Mather lost the presidency of Harvard in 1701, they both acted like spoiled children; their power was slipping away from them, for when the public caught their balance after the witchcraft scare, they blamed the Mathers unfairly as being the chief leaders in the victim hunt. To the ends of their lives, in 1723 and 1728, they were proudly unrelenting, but their last years

were embittered by the knowledge that their power and their influence were departed from them.

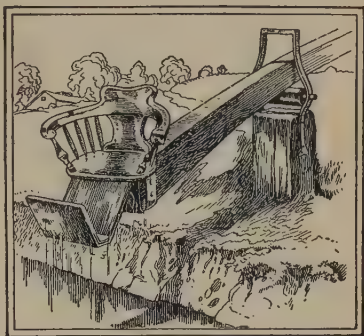
**The alliance of superstition with religion.** The bulk of their authorship was immense, even though most of it was in the form of pamphlets or booklets, for it amounted in the case of Increase to about one hundred and fifty titles, and in the case of Cotton to nearly four hundred. But they are chiefly remembered for three books: "An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences," by the elder; and the "Wonders of the Invisible World" and the "Magnalia Christi Americana: or The Ecclesiastical History of New England," by the younger. The first two of these are unintended explanations of how a whole community could ever have been swept into the Salem witchcraft excesses of 1692. Any educated man who should today advance the theories which were soberly expounded by these two really learned men would be held up to scorn and very possibly be suspected of insanity. Yet two hundred years ago the world was ignorant of the simplest facts of science. Popular superstition therefore ran riot; and the confusion was increased by the belief that God would interpose in the affairs of daily individual life, and that a personal devil was walking up and down the earth seeking whom he might devour. Medicine in those days was hardly a science even in the broadest sense of the word. Physicians depended on a few simple herb remedies and on powerful emetics and the letting of blood. The populace believed in curatives which still are resorted to only by children and the most ignorant of grown-ups—such as anointing implements with which they had been injured, in order to heal cuts and bruises, or being touched by the monarch as a remedy for scrofula, the "king's evil." Sir Kenelm Digby, a well-known subject of Charles II, reported that he overcame a persistent illness by having the fumes of camomile poured into his ear. The same sort of ignorant experimenting was common in all the other sciences; superstition naturally flourished. Between 1560 and 1600 in the little kingdom of Scotland, which had a population no larger than that of Massachusetts today,

there were eight thousand executions for witchcraft—an average of nearly four a week ; and James I, who was Scotland's gift to England, was the royal author of a work on demonology.

**Increase Mather's "Illustrious Providences."** What the New Englanders, and among them the Mathers, believed was, therefore, not unusual at the time. In fact, both the Mathers were somewhat less credulous than their fellows, but they only substituted one superstition for another. Their way of casting off the vulgar old pagan beliefs was to contend that these vain and foolish ideas were put into Christian minds by Satan and his emissaries. Said Increase Mather in his "Illustrious Providences":

The *Chaldeans* and other Magicians amongst the Heathen Nations of old, practised a sort of *Divination by Sieves* . . .

that so they might by the motion thereof, know where something stollen or lost was to be found. Some also have believed that if they should cast Lead into the Water, then *Saturn* would discover to them the thing they inquired after. It is not *Saturn* but *Satan* that maketh the discovery, when anything is in such a way revealed. And of this sort is the foolish Sorcery of those Women that put the white of an Egg into a Glass of Water, so that they may be able to divine of what Occupation their future husband shall be. It were much better to remain ignorant than thus to consult with the Devil. These kind of practices appear at first blush to be Diabolical ; so that I shall not multiply Words in evincing the evil of them. It is noted that *the Children of Israel did secretly those things that are not right against the Lord their God* 2 King, 17, 9. I am told there are some who do secretly practice such Abominations as these last mentioned, unto whom the Lord in mercy give deep and unfeigned Repentance and pardon for their grievous Sin.



SCOLD'S DUCKING STOOL



These preachers thus turned superstition into an enemy of the true religion,<sup>1</sup> as it assuredly is; but they treated it not as the result of ignorance, but as a device of Satan. "The Wonders of the Invisible World" and "Illustrious Providences" are cut from the same cloth, so that an indication of the contents of the one just mentioned will give an idea of them both. The chapter



COTTON MATHER

headings run as follows: Of Remarkable Sea Deliverances; Preservation; Lightening; Philosophical Meditations; Things Preternatural; That there are Daemons and Possessed Persons; Apparitions; Conscience; Deaf and Dumb Persons; Tempests; Earthquakes; and Judgments. As a whole, the book is a collection of curious anecdotes taken on almost any hearsay, but almost all at second or third hand. In point of superstition the Mathers, to repeat, should be con-

sidered in two lights: compared with educated men of the twentieth century they were almost barbarous in what they were willing to believe, but in their own time they were fighting superstition like good churchmen.

**Cotton Mather's "Magnalia."** The most ambitious work that either father or son produced was Cotton Mather's "Magnalia,"

<sup>1</sup>The distinction should always be kept clear between "religion," "theology," and the "Church." Religion is the controlling belief in a man which concerns his relations to his fellow men, to God, and to the after life. Theology is a more or less scientific and formal statement of religious belief. The Church is the organization through which men combine to express their religion. Similar distinctions may be made as to education, pedagogy, and the school; justice, law, and the courts; and so on.

a history of the Church in New England. This was a bulky two-volume effort, divided into seven parts, or books. As a matter of fact, it was really a general history of the region by a man who regarded the existence of New England and the existence of the Church as one and the same thing. In this general belief as well as in many of his details Cotton Mather revealed himself as a hopeless conservative of his day—hopeless because it was already evident to all but him and his kind that the State was shaking off the control of the Church leaders. One can get a fair idea of the bias of the book from the opening paragraph:

It is the Opinion of some, though 't is *but* an *Opinion*, and *but* of *some* Learned Men, That when the Sacred Oracles of Heaven assure us, *The Things under the Earth* are some of those, *whose Knees are to bow in the Name of Jesus*, by those *Things* are meant the Inhabitants of *America*, who are Antipodes to those of the other *Hemispheres*. I would not quote any words of *Lactantius*, though there are *some* to countenance this Interpretation, because of their being so *Ungeographical*; nor would I go to strengthen the Interpretation by reciting the Words of the *Indians* to the first *White Invaders* of their Territories, *We hear you are come from under the World, to take our World from us*. But granting the *uncertainty* of such an Exposition, I shall yet give the Church of God a certain account of these *Things*, which in *America* have been Believing and Adoring the glorious *Name* of Jesus; and of that Country in *America*, where those *Things* have been attended with Circumstances most remarkable.

The "Magnalia" is really an attempt at a general history of New England from 1620 to 1698, containing classified material on the governors, magistrates, and preachers, a history of Harvard, a collection of reports of church transactions, an account of the Indian Wars, and "A Faithful Record of many Illustrious Wonderful Providences." Yet for historical data it is almost as unreliable as the libelous "New English Canaan" of Thomas Morton. For Mather was as eager to glorify the Church as Morton was to discredit the Puritans. The historians have

abandoned Mather as a safe authority. His sin has found him out, even though he committed it in the name of the Lord.

**The open-mindedness of Samuel Sewall (1652-1730): his life.** The man in this period in whom complete faith can be put is Samuel Sewall, who did not profess to be an author except in an incidental way. He lived from 1652 to 1730 and kept a very full diary from 1673 to 1729.



SAMUEL SEWALL

This was written with no thought of publication, and actually was not printed until a hundred and fifty years later, when it was given to the world by the Massachusetts Historical Society. In American literature Sewall's Diary occupies a place almost exactly parallel to that of John Evelyn's in English letters. Their lives and their long diaries covered about the same years, and they held corresponding positions in the communities. Both were educated men,—Sewall

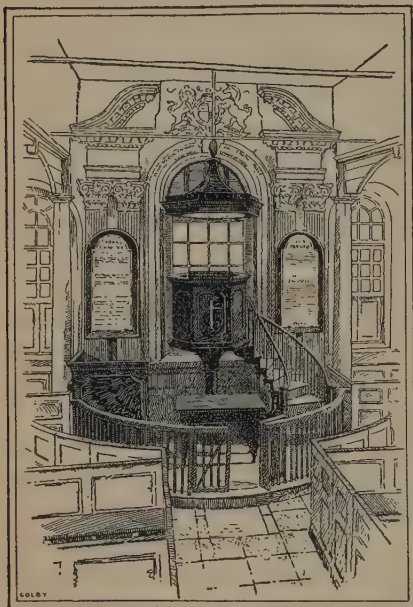
was a graduate of Harvard,—and both were highly respected and trusted. Sewall held a minor position at Harvard connected with the library, was prominent in church affairs, and was a judge, officiating at the time of the Salem witchcraft trials.

**His Diary as a record of events.** An informal journal written without prejudice, by such a man as he, gives material of the greatest value for a picture of the times. It is material for a picture, of course, and not the picture itself, for it lacks anything in the way of composition, just as do the facts of ordinary, daily life in the order of their occurrence. But out of it two main threads of interest may be unwoven. One is the sober but not unrelieved background of the time, itself a com-

posite of various strands. Church observances were its strongest fiber. Few weeks pass in which there is no record of sermon, fast, christening, wedding, funeral, or special celebration. These were among the chief social happenings of the calendar. Funerals as well as more festive occasions were accompanied with gifts of gloves and rings; refreshments were ample if not lavish; and the bill for strong drinks was always a heavy item, for it must be remembered that prohibition is of recent origin, though among the Puritans self-control made drunkenness as infrequent as drinking was common. Against frivolity too they set their minds; and Sewall's Diary gives a protest at "tricks" and dancing and May festivals, and even at Christmas and Easter, which were triply hated because they had their origins in pagan tradition and had come to the present through the Church of Rome and the Church of England. Yet the objections to these practices and festivals show that they were real disturbances in Sewall's Boston, as were the roistering of sailors and other strangers in town.

**His Diary as a revelation of Sewall's mind.** The other and more important thread is the revelation of the inner mind of a flesh-and-blood colonial American. It takes patient reading to recreate the real man; but he is here in these pages, with all the inconsistencies that make up life out of storybooks. He was all in all a fine, devout, broad-gauge man,—and this is what any biographer would tell of him,—with a moderate supply of littleness and petty vanity, which the biographer would be almost certain to suppress. And he was in himself a record of the public opinion of his generation. He wrote two other things besides his Diary. One is a theological treatise which was as uninspired as the paragraph quoted from Mather's "Magnalia," and on much the same theme. It shows him to be an apparently hopeless old fogey. The other is a pamphlet called "The Selling of Joseph," which was probably the first antislavery utterance printed in America and implies that Samuel Sewall was centuries ahead of the times. There is at second glance nothing perplexing in this contradiction. Judge Sewall was a normal

man, who stood between the oldest-fashioned and the newest-fashioned thinkers. Sometimes he leaned backward, and sometimes forward; but on the whole he was inclined to advance. Of this he gave one famous proof. Five years after the Salem



A HIGH PULPIT SUCH AS THAT BENEATH  
WHICH SAMUEL SEWALL CONFESSED  
REPENTANCE

trials he had the honesty to admit to himself that he had been all wrong in his judgment, and had the courage to make a public confession of his repentance. He chose one of the hardest ways of doing it. Among the "curious punishments of by-gone days" one was the humiliation of disreputable persons by forcing them to sit at the foot of the church pulpit while the minister read a public reproof. On Fast Day, 1697, Samuel Sewall of his own choice posted a bill which could be read by any who would, and, giving a copy of it to the Reverend Mr. Wil-

lard, stood up at the reading before the congregation. The method of atoning for his mistake proves that he was still a devout and faithful Puritan worshiper, but the fact that he did so at all shows that he could confess errors, even when they had been committed in behalf of the Church. The Mathers could neither have seen nor acknowledged such mistakes. They were too cocksure of being always right. So life passed on, leaving them by the wayside; and Samuel Sewall was with the majority who left them behind.



The silent unorthodoxy<sup>1</sup> of Sarah Kemble Knight (1666-1727). A third representative of the attitudes of mind at the changing of the centuries was a genial woman, Mrs. Smith Kemble Knight. She was not in any sense a public figure, like the preachers and the judge just mentioned, nor did she pursue the habit of writing a continued diary like Sewall's. Most emphatically she was not given, like many other women in her day, to making a daily record of religious emotions, which were "aggravated by overwork, indigestion, and a gospel of gloom."

Her "Journal of a Journey from Boston to New York." But there was one experience which she did record for her own satisfaction and which was published more than a century later, in 1825—her "Journal of a Journey from Boston to New York in 1704." At this time a vigorous woman of thirty-eight, a wife and a mother, she set out alone on a ten-day journey, taking such guides as she could engage from one stage to the next. The hardships were considerable and the discomforts and inconveniences very great; and the striking fact about them is that she bore up under them in a good-humored, matter-of-fact, sort of twentieth-century way. An accident was an accident and not a visitation from on high; a disagreeable or churlish or even a dishonest person was somebody to be put up with and not to be moralized on as unscriptural. The worst innkeeper she encountered was a man to avoid in the future rather than a man to convert; she did not seem shocked by a drunken quarrel late one night, but she was annoyed because she wanted to go to sleep.

She was at times positively frivolous and irreverent in her allusions. Crossing a river one day she was very near to being tipped over.

The canoe was very small and shallow, so that when we were in [it] seemed ready to take in water, which greatly terrified me, and

<sup>1</sup>As "orthodox" means "correct in one's doctrines or belief," each community has its own orthodoxy, and unorthodoxy consists in being in disagreement with the established religious opinions of the majority. In New England, however, there are many towns in which the Congregational is still rather quaintly called the Orthodox Church.

caused me to be very circumspect, sitting with my hands fast on each side, my eyes steady, not daring so much as to lodge my tongue a hair's breadth more on one side of my mouth than t'other, nor so much as to think on Lot's wife; for a wry thought would have overset our wherry.

Her jests about the name of the innkeeper, Mr. Devil, would have landed her in the stocks had she made them publicly in Boston.

The post encouraged me by saying we should be well accommodated at Mr. Devil's, a few miles further; but I questioned whether we ought to go to the Devil to be helped out of affliction. However, like the rest of the deluded souls that post to the infernal den, we made all possible speed to this Devil's habitation; where, alighting in good assurance of good accommodations, we were going in.

The accommodations turned out to be anything but good; and she left her host with a sigh of relief and the thought "He differed only in this from the old fellow in t'other country—he let us depart."

These excerpts give an indication of what was going on under one very respectable bonnet when Mrs. Knight was sitting decorously in her Boston pew. She was a highly respected woman in the Puritan community. She was accustomed to its ways. There is no word of motherly regret that she was away from her little daughter on Christmas Day, for Christmas was not a festal day in her calendar. Of the people who were coming into manhood and womanhood when Sarah Kemble Knight was born, Hawthorne wrote in "The Scarlet Letter": "The generation next to the early immigrants wore the blackest shade of Puritanism, and so darkened the national visage with it, that all the subsequent years have not sufficed to clear it up. We have yet to learn again the forgotten art of gayety."

**Summary.** It was men like the author of the "Magnalia" who had darkened the national visage, but women here and there, like the writer of this journal, who already had returning gleams of gayety. Of the people whom we have taken as types of New

England thought at this period, Cotton Mather may fairly be regarded as representing the faith of a declining theology, Samuel Sewall the hope of a broader and more generous civic attitude, and Mrs. Knight as the flicker of charity or warm-hearted and genial fellow feeling which had been almost extinguished in the seventeenth century.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Do you know of any laws now existing that are only partially enforced or are wholly disregarded though they have not been repealed?

2. What were the offenses of Governor Andros and the circumstances of his withdrawal?

3. What are three signs that between 1690 and 1700 the influence of the clergy was beginning to decrease in eastern Massachusetts?

4. Read and report on the Salem witchcraft episode as recounted in John Fiske's "New France and New England," chap. v.

5. What are the likenesses and the differences between the present interest in spirit communications and the beliefs in seventeenth-century New England?

6. What popular superstitions still survive among educated people? Are people actually influenced by any of them, or do they only pretend to be?

7. Read Fitz-Greene Halleck's "Connecticut," stanzas xiii-xxvi, and Whittier's "Double-headed Snake of Newbury," ll. 71-85, as well as Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (see page 119 in this volume), for typical literary expressions of aversion to Cotton Mather.

8. Are there still Church and legal ordinances prohibiting or restricting amusements in the United States?

9. What are the two chief threads of interest in Samuel Sewall's *Diary*?

10. The following questions may be answered from the *Chronological Outlines* at the close of this chapter:

a. What was Increase Mather's most important work? What great English classic was published the same year?

b. Name two of the best-known English poets who were writing in the fifteen years between 1670 and 1685.

c. What colonies were especially troubled by the Indians during this time?

# SECTION I

DATES	AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS	AMERICAN LITERARY HISTORY
1607-1630		Anne Bradstreet born in England, 1612
1630-1650	<p>WILLIAM BRADFORD: History of Plymouth Plantation (written from about 1630 on). First published in full in 1856</p> <p>THOMAS MORTON: New English Canaan. Published in Amsterdam, 1637</p> <p>The Bay Psalm Book. Cambridge, 1640</p> <p>Roger Williams-John Cotton controversy, 1644-1652</p> <p>NATHANIEL WARD: The Simple Cobler of Aggawam. Published in London, 1647</p>	<p>Michael Wigglesworth born in England, 1631</p> <p>Increase Mather born in America, 1639</p> <p>Thomas Morton (born in England, 1575(?)) died, 1646</p>
1650-1670	<p>ANNE BRADSTREET: The Tenth Muse lately sprung up in America. London, 1650</p> <p>MICHAEL WIGGLESWORTH: The Day of Doom. Published, probably in Cambridge, 1662</p>	<p>Samuel Sewall born in England, 1652</p> <p>Nathaniel Ward (born in England, 1578) died in England, 1652</p> <p>William Bradford (born in England, 1590) died, 1657</p> <p>Cotton Mather born in America, 1663</p> <p>Mrs. Sarah Kemble Knight born in America, 1666</p>
1670-1685	<p>SAMUEL SEWALL: Diary from 1673 to October, 1720. Published, 1882.</p> <p>ANNE BRADSTREET: Contemplations, 1678</p> <p>INCREASE MATHER: An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences, 1684</p>	<p>Anne Bradstreet died, 1672</p> <p>Roger Williams (born in England, 1604) died, 1683</p>
1685-1700	COTTON MATHER: The Wonders of the Invisible World, 1693	
1700-1720	<p>SAMUEL SEWALL: The Selling of Joseph, 1700</p> <p>COTTON MATHER: Magnalia Christi Americana, 1702</p> <p>SARAH KEMBLE KNIGHT: Journal of a Journey from Boston to New York in 1704. First published, 1825</p>	<p>Michael Wigglesworth died, 1705</p> <p>Benjamin Franklin born, 1706</p>

# SECTION I

ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LITERATURE	HISTORICAL EVENTS
<p>Milton born, 1608            Shakespeare died, 1616            Ben Jonson, poet laureate, 1619-1637            Bunyan born, 1628</p>	<p>Landing of Royalists at Jamestown, April, 1607            Landing of Pilgrims in the <i>Mayflower</i> at Plymouth, December, 1620            Charles I (succeeding James I), king of England, 1625-1649            Massachusetts Bay Colony founded, 1628</p>
<p>Ben Jonson died, 1637            Milton: <i>Lycidas</i>, 1638            John Evelyn: <i>Diary</i>, from 1641 to 1706. Published, 1818</p>	<p>Boston founded, 1630; Maryland, 1634; Connecticut, 1636            Harvard College founded, 1636            War with the Pequot Indians, 1636            Providence founded by Roger Williams, 1636            New Haven founded, 1638; Maine founded, 1641            First printing-press in America, Cambridge, 1639            The New England Confederation formed, 1643            Louis XIV, king of France, 1643-1715            Peace of Westphalia, closing the Thirty Years' War in Europe, 1648            Trial and execution of Charles I, 1649            The Commonwealth in England, 1649-1660</p>
<p>Milton became blind, 1652            Isaac Walton: <i>The Compleat Angler</i>, 1653            Pepys' <i>Diary</i> from 1660 to 1669. Published, 1825            Milton: <i>Paradise Lost</i>, 1667</p>	<p>First English Navigation Act, 1651            Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, 1653-1658            The Restoration, crowning of Charles II (1660-1685), 1660            The Carolinas founded, 1663            New York and New Jersey founded, 1664            Holland lost her American possessions to England, 1664            Scientific societies established, in London, 1662; in Paris, 1666; in Berlin, 1700</p>
<p>Dryden, poet laureate, 1670-1688            Milton: <i>Paradise Regained</i>, 1671            Steele and Addison born, 1672            Milton died, 1674            Dryden: <i>All for Love</i>, 1678            Bunyan: <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i>, Part I, 1678; Part II, 1684</p>	<p>Marquette and Joliet discovered the Mississippi River, 1673            English Test Act, excluding from office all who did not subscribe wholly to Established Church, 1673            King Philip's War (Indian) in Massachusetts, 1675            Bacon's Rebellion, in Virginia, 1676            New Hampshire charter granted, 1679            Pennsylvania founded by William Penn, 1681            La Salle made voyage down the Mississippi, 1682            Massachusetts charter annulled by king, 1684</p>
<p>Dryden: <i>Absalom and Achitophel</i>, 1681-1682            Bunyan died, 1688            Gay and Pope born, 1688            Voltaire born, 1694            Defoe: <i>Essay upon Projects</i>, 1697</p>	<p>James II, king of England, 1685-1688            English Revolution, 1688: William and Mary, sovereigns of England, 1689-1702            Governor Andros overthrown and imprisoned, 1689            Toleration Act in England, permitting Dissenters to hold meetings, 1689            New charter granted to Massachusetts, 1691            Salem witchcraft, 1692            Charter granted to William and Mary College, 1692            Printing-presses in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York by 1693</p>
<p>The <i>Daily Courant</i> (the first daily paper in London, exact date uncertain)            Addison and Steele: <i>The Tatler</i>, 1709-1711; <i>The Spectator</i>, March, 1711-December, 1712; three months, 1714            Pope: <i>Rape of the Lock</i>, 1712            Addison died, 1719            Defoe: <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>, 1719-1720</p>	<p>Yale College founded, 1700            Anne, queen of England, 1702-1714            Delaware separated from Pennsylvania, 1703            Union of Scotland and England as Great Britain, 1707            Frederick III, first king of Prussia, 1713-1740            Treaty of Utrecht, ending War of Spanish Succession, 1713            George I, first Hanoverian king of England, 1714-1727            Quadruple Alliance of Austria, Prussia, England, and Russia, 1719</p>



- d.* What explorers were active, and what did they accomplish?
- e.* What were Cotton Mather's most important works?
- f.* When the first one was published, who were the new sovereigns on the throne of England?
- g.* While Increase and Cotton Mather were preaching and writing Puritan theology, what was the policy of the English government toward dissenters from the Established Church?
- h.* In general point of time, what is the relation between the Diaries of Pepys and Evelyn and that of Samuel Sewall?
- i.* Was Sewall's Diary published during his life or soon after?
- j.* What was the year of the Salem witchcraft frightfulness?
- k.* What did Sarah Kemble Knight write? How long after writing was it published? What two other books were published about the time it was written, and what was the general character of each?
- l.* By the time Samuel Sewall had stopped writing his Diary, how many of the people we have discussed so far were living?

## CHAPTER V

### BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706-1790)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. The Autobiography.

Every student of the history of American literature should know Franklin's "Autobiography" entire. (See the Standard English Classics reprint, Ginn and Company.) If the reading of the whole work cannot be done, selections can be found in various books.

BOYNTON, P. H. Milestones in American Literature, pp. 50-59. Ginn and Company.

CAIRNS, W. B. Early American Writers, pp. 311-334. The Macmillan Company.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. Readings from American Literature, pp. 92-110. Ginn and Company.

Whether the work is read as a whole or in part, the study may well be divided by having individuals or groups pay special attention to special subjects.

1. Under personal characteristics, for example : his continued emphasis on usefulness ; his refusal to allow his emotions to carry him away (whether anger, love, religious fervor, or desire for revenge) ; his willingness to act unscrupulously for what he thought was a good end ; his self-analysis (in other places than the long passage on the virtues) ; his theories about eating and drinking ; his thrift and industry ; his relations with the clergy and to the church ; his public spirit and his activities in connection with the currency system, colonial defense, the postal system, or more local matters like street-paving and lighting, fire protection, and public health.

2. Under his literary characteristics : his emulation of Addison's style (compare passages of this and the *Spectator*) ; his study of foreign languages ; his respect for Pope, and his likeness in the use of maxims ; the difference between his style and that of Irving or Cooper, based on comparison of definite passages ; his wide range of reading ; his interest in literary and debating clubs, in the founding of a library and an academy ; his development of the Almanac.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

Benjamin Franklin's life  
The variety and number of his activities  
The sources of his belief in usefulness  
    His early reading  
    The characteristic thinking of his day  
    His trade  
    His conscious self-development  
His writings—*Poor Richard's Almanac*  
    "The Way to Wealth"  
    The "Autobiography"  
        Its simplicity  
        Its definiteness  
        Its honesty  
Franklin's religion  
Conclusion

**Benjamin Franklin's life (1706–1790).** Benjamin Franklin is the man who reflected better and earlier than other Americans the complete change from the Puritan point of view—reflecting it so completely that he must be understood as an extreme case and not as a typical one. In education and character he offered a whole set of contrasts to the leaders of seventeenth-century New England. He did not come of a cultured family; he was not a college student; he did not enter any of the learned professions—ministry, law, or teaching; he was not an active supporter of the Church; he did not live in the New England where he was born. In fact, he was one of the first to act on the saying "Boston is a very good place—to come from."

Franklin was born in Boston in 1706, the youngest son of a tallow-chandler and the fifteenth of seventeen children. He was industrious and bookish as a boy, and before he was seventeen years old he had trained himself to write in the fashion of the English essayist Joseph Addison, had entered an apprenticeship in his brother's printing shop, and had written many articles published in his brother's paper, the *New England Courant*. In 1723, as the result of troubles with his brother, he ran away

to Philadelphia. From there he went to London for two years, working there as a printer and coming back with a printer's outfit on the promise of the irresponsible Governor Keith to set him up in the business after his return. The failure of the governor to keep his word did Franklin no harm in the end, for he established his own printing house in 1728, and in 1748, at the age of forty-two, he was able to retire with a moderate fortune. During this time he had not only succeeded in Philadelphia but had built up partnerships in New York, Newport, Lancaster (Pennsylvania), Charleston (South Carolina), Kingston, Jamaica, and Antigua.

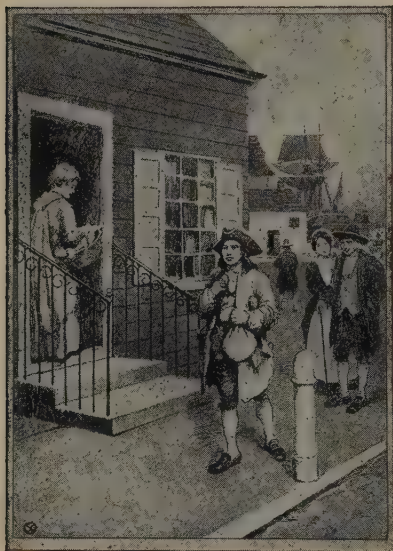
**The variety and number of his activities.** The activities of his life were so varied and interwoven that they may best be summarized under a few simple heads.

(1) As a public-spirited citizen of Philadelphia he organized a debating society, the Junto, in 1727; established the *Pennsylvania Gazette* (which later became the *Saturday Evening Post*) in 1729; founded the first circulating library in America in 1731; conducted *Poor Richard's Almanac* from 1732 to 1748; organized the American Philosophical Society in 1744; and in 1749 founded the academy which developed into the University of Pennsylvania. (2) As an inventor he perfected the Franklin stove in 1742 and devised methods of street-paving and lighting which were widely adopted. (3) As a scientist he proved the identity of lightning and electricity in 1752, and went on from that to further investigations which sooner or later brought him elec-



FRANKLIN'S BIRTHPLACE, BOSTON

tion to the Royal Academy of Sciences, and medals and diplomas from other societies in St. Petersburg, Madrid, Edinburgh, Padua, and Turin. (4) As a holder of public trusts and offices he became clerk of the colonial Assembly of Pennsylvania in 1736; postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737; deputy postmaster-



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S ENTRANCE TO  
PHILADELPHIA

general of the colonies in 1753; commissioner from Pennsylvania to the Albany Congress in 1754; colonial agent to London from Pennsylvania in 1757 and 1764 and for Massachusetts in 1770; one of the framers of the Declaration of Independence; minister to the French court from the United States in 1778; a signer of the Peace Articles in 1783; president of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1785-1787; and a framer of the Constitution of the United States. Such a catalogue is not a thing to be exactly memorized. Its

value is like that of an entry in "Who's Who in America"—it should be referred to when needed. Yet it is worth reading and re-reading as an evidence of the almost unparalleled variety and usefulness of occupations which filled this man's life.

**The sources of his belief in usefulness.** Usefulness is, without question, the idea which Franklin most emphasized in his writings and exemplified in his conduct. In comparison with the Puritan fathers he was more interested in his own times than in eternity, more actively concerned with Philadelphia and Pennsylvania and the United States of America than with the



mansions prepared above. This attitude of mind was not a freakish or accidental one; it was caused by his boyhood influences and by the kind of English and American thinking which characterized his whole century.

He came of what he himself called an "obscure family," his ancestors in the near generations having been hard-working, intelligent English clerks and artisans. They were Nonconformists, and independent enough to take their chances in the New World for the sake of liberty of conscience. But the lesson that he learned from his parents was related more to week days than to Sundays, and was, perhaps unconsciously, shown in the epitaph which he wrote for them. At two points in it he recorded his belief that God helps those who help themselves, laying special stress on the degree to which they help themselves:

By constant labor and industry,  
With God's blessing,

he says, and again,

Be encouraged to diligence in thy calling  
And distrust not Providence.

**His early reading.** Cotton Mather, whom Franklin sometimes quoted with respect, would have reversed the ideas in order and importance; yet it was not any of Cotton Mather's sermons that Franklin quoted, but his "Essays to Do Good" and his ability to draw a lesson from any slight event—knocking at a door, washing his hands, even seeing a tall man pass on the street. Franklin's early reading was almost wholly in the field of what might be called common-sense literature—discussions of daily life and how to get on in it. He read "Pilgrim's Progress," which of all religious books is one of the most definite on questions of earthly conduct. He read a great deal of history and biography, Defoe "Upon Projects," Locke "Concerning Human Understanding" and "The Art of Thinking," and Addison on all the common-sense subjects that make up the contents of the *Spectator*. He read the rimed "Essays" of

Alexander Pope, too, using a quotation from one of them to confirm his belief in a system of arguing by means of asking questions, which is known as the "Socratic method."

The characteristic thinking of his day. In a word, he filled his boyish mind with the special kind of writing and thinking which belonged to the first half of the eighteenth century in England, and this was exactly the kind to be valuable to a youth who was fighting his way to success. For this period was a particularly prosaic and practical one. In the two generations just gone England had passed through the Puritan uprising against Charles I, the return of the Stuarts to the throne, and the further rebellion against James II. Religious enthusiasm had risen to its height in the middle of the century, but had already waned by the year when John Milton received only ten pounds for the manuscript of "Paradise Lost." At the end of the century politics had definitely overthrown religion as a subject of popular discussion. Little newspapers had sprung up in surprising numbers, the coffeehouses had provided centers for conversation, and a common-sense age was settling down to a rather unaspiring and common-sense existence. Sometimes under the impulse of a world movement a few leaders of thought have a great deal to do with actually molding the character of the period in which they live, but in less inspiring times the popular writers produce just about "what the public wants." The period of Franklin's youth was one of the latter kind, and Addison, Pope, and their followers were writing for a public who wanted to keep on the surface of life. It was as if the people had said: "All this religious zeal of the last century only made England uncomfortable. Just see what confusion it threw us into! Now we are back about where we were when the trouble started. Let's be sensible, and stick to facts, and stop quarreling with each other." So the populace, who began reading in greater numbers than ever before, read the little newspapers; and the various groups of congenial people talked things over in the coffeehouses; and Addison made it his ambition to bring "philosophy" (by which he meant a simple

theory of everyday living) down from the clouds and into the field of ordinary thinking. The plays of Shakespeare would have helped Franklin very little in the early stages of the printing business; so would the poems of Milton; but the essays of Addison, Pope, and Defoe made for him what would be called today "excellent vocational reading." And he profited by it to the limit.

**His trade.** Moreover, if literature helped to make him a good printer, printing was no less helpful toward making him a good writer. There are few trades or crafts which demand so high a degree of accuracy. A boy or girl who achieves a grade of 95 per cent in any study, even in mathematics, is well above the average; but a typesetter or proofreader who avoids error in only nineteen out of every twenty operations will have a short career in any printing-house. The boy who, like Franklin, Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Walt Whitman, William Dean Howells, and Joel Chandler Harris, has spent some years in the printing-room and the editorial office has received a training which is miles beyond what can ever be given in any school or college composition course.

**His conscious self-development.** To this important training Franklin added a conscious attempt to develop his own powers. Printing and the love of books led the horse to water, but his desire for self-expression made him drink. Of this he tells in an early passage of the "Autobiography." His daily work had taught him to spell and punctuate correctly, but he was faulty in choice of words and in "perspicuity," or clearness of construction. So he took Addison's *Spectator* as his model, put paragraphs in his own words, then tried to set them back into the original form, compared the two products, and made up his mind wherein Addison's versions were better than his, and wherein, as he sometimes thought, his were better than his teacher's. He also followed up the art of discussion both in speech and in writing, making it always a point to convince his opponents without antagonizing them. These things he did, not in order to become a professional writer, but solely in order to

utter or write his ideas to the best effect. "It has ever since," he says, "been a pleasure to me to see good workmen handle their tools; and it has been useful to me, having learned so much by it as to be able to do little jobs myself." Prose writing was simply a tool for him—the most useful one that he ever mastered and, as he says elsewhere, the principal means of his advancement.

As long as he was a printer (until he was forty-two years old) he used his pen in writing clear, interesting, salable copy—chiefly in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and in *Poor Richard's Almanac*; but during and after that time he put his powers to even greater use as a speaker and as a writer of articles and pamphlets on affairs of public interest. He was almost always simple, definite, and practical, for he wrote to the mass of people with little education. He realized that if he was to bring his points home to them he must not write

"over their heads," and that he must appeal to their common sense and their self-interest; and he was invariably good-humored, for he knew that good humor makes many friends and no enemies.

His writings—*Poor Richard's Almanac*. Out of the great mass of Franklin's published writings—and they run to a dozen large volumes—two deserve special attention as pieces

*Poor Richard, 1733.*

A N

# Almanack

For the Year of Christ

1 7 3 3,

Being the First after I EAP YEAR:

<i>And makes five the Creation</i>	Years
By the Account of the E. Stern Gerards	7241
By the Latin Church, when O'ert y	6932
By the Computation of W W	5742
By the Roman Chronology	5682
By the Jewish Rabbits	5494

*Wherein is contained.*

The Lunations, Eclipses, Judgment of the Weather, Spring Tides, Planets Motions & mutual Aspects, Sun and Moon's Rising and Setting, Length of Days, Time of High Water, Fairs, Courts, and observable Days.

Fitted to the Latitude of Forty Degrees, and a Meridian of Five Hours West from London, but may without sensible Error serve all the adjacent Places, even from Newfoundland to South Carolina.

By RICHARD SAUNDERS, Philom.

PHILADELPHIA:  
Printed and sold by B. FRANKLIN, at the New  
Printing Office near the Market

*The Third Impression.*

A TITLE-PAGE OF *POOR RICHARD'S*  
*ALMANAC*

of American literature: *Poor Richard's Almanac* and the "Autobiography." The former of these was a commercial undertaking; it was written to sell. The almanac, an annual publication of which the calendar was a very small part, had been popular in England and America for many generations before Franklin started his own. It preceded the newspaper and until 1800, or even later, reached a wider public. The second piece of printing in this country was *Pierce's Almanack*, printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1639. Other annual series followed: in Boston, 1676; in Philadelphia, 1676; in New York, 1697; in Rhode Island, 1728; and in Virginia, 1731. There had been, however, only one great almanac editor to precede Franklin in America—Nathaniel Ames, who began publishing his series in Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1726. Besides the calendar, the astronomical data for the year, and the half-humorous weather predictions, the chief feature of Ames's was the poetry, very considerable in bulk, and the "interlined wit and humor," which was brief and usually rather pointless. Franklin, realizing the fondness of his generation for the wise sayings of which Alexander Pope was then the master hand in the English-speaking world, dropped the poetry and studied to expand the interlined material of Ames into the chief contribution of his "Richard Saunders." "I endeavored to make it both entertaining and useful," he said in the "Autobiography," "and it accordingly came to be in such demand, that I reaped considerable profit from it, vending annually near ten thousand. And observing that it was generally read, scarce any neighborhood in the province being without it, I considered it as a proper vehicle for conveying instruction among the common people, who bought scarcely any other books. I therefore filled all the little spaces that occurred between the remarkable days in the calendar with proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality, as the means of procuring wealth, and thereby securing virtue; it being more difficult for a man in want, to act always honestly, as, to use here one of those proverbs, *it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright.*"



"The Way to Wealth." In the Almanac of 1757 he collected the sayings of the last twenty-five years into a timely essay on "The Way to Wealth," making an old man deliver a speech filled with quotations from "Poor Richard." This not only contained sound practical advice for any time but was also pertinent to a political issue of the moment, and so applied to the state as well as to all the people in it. It was reprinted by itself and had an immense circulation in America and abroad, in the original and in several translations. Very likely since the "Day of Doom," in 1662, nothing had been so influential in the colonies as the "Way to Wealth," in 1757; and no contrast could better indicate the change that had taken place between those two dates. Said Father Abraham, the old speaker:

It would be thought a hard Government that should tax its People one-tenth part of their Time, to be employed in its Service. But *Idleness* taxes many of us much more, if we reckon all that is spent in absolute *Sloth*, or doing of nothing, with that which is spent in idle Employments or Amusements, that amount to nothing. Sloth, by bringing on Diseases, absolutely shortens Life. *Sloth, like rust, consumes faster than Labour wears; while the used Key, is always bright*, as *Poor Richard* says. *But dost thou love life, then do not squander Time, for that's the stuff Life is made of*, as *Poor Richard* says. How much more than is necessary do we spend in sleep, forgetting that *The sleeping Fox catches no Poultry*, and that *There will be sleeping enough in the Grave*, as *Poor Richard* says.

This was the sort of workaday advice that was shouldering the old-time theology into modest Sabbath-day retirement.

The "Autobiography." Franklin's "Autobiography" is the greatest of his writings, if not the greatest of all his achievements. "Poor Richard" and the "Way to Wealth" are full of good common sense, but they belong only to the "efficiency" school of ideas and morality; and they are chiefly interesting because they so well mirror what was in the eighteenth-century mind. The "Autobiography" has a larger claim to attention than these, for by general consent it has come to be regarded as one of the great classics of literature. Several features have

combined to make it deserve this high place. Simply stated, they are all nothing more than ways of explaining that this book is the simple, definite, honest life-story of an eminent man, as he recalled it in his old age.

**Its simplicity.** In the first place, it is simple and uncalculated. It was not composed, like "Poor Richard," to sell, nor, like many of Franklin's speeches and pamphlets, to convince by skillful argument. As a matter of fact, Franklin did not want to write it at all, and consented only when the insistence of many friends and relatives made it easier to do it than to leave it undone. Moreover, he dropped it for the thirteen years from 1771 to 1784, took it up again when wearied, old, and ill, and left it at his death hardly more than well started, with all the most celebrated part of his life still to be recounted. It is simple, therefore, because it was done with no desire to create an impression or to be "literary" and is the unadorned narrative of an old man familiarly told to those who knew him best.



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

**Its definiteness.** For the same reason it is definite and homely in what he chose to record. It is the little, nameless, unremembered episodes not set down in more pretentious histories for which the "Autobiography" is itself best remembered. Some of the details make real the conditions of living in those simple times—the invention of the stove named after him, the im-

provements in street-lighting and paving, the organization of a fire company. Others are typical of human nature in any age, as his portrait of the croaker Samuel Mickle, who sadly predicted Franklin's failure as a printer, or as his jocular account of the entrance of luxury into his own household.

We have an English proverb that says, "*He that would thrive, must ask his wife.*" It was lucky for me that I had one as much disposed to industry and frugality as myself. She assisted me cheerfully in my business, folding and stitching pamphlets, tending shop, purchasing old linen rags for the paper-makers, etc., etc. We kept no idle servants, our table was plain and simple, our furniture of the cheapest. For instance, my breakfast was a long time bread and milk (no tea), and I ate it out of a twopenny earthen porringer, with a pewter spoon. But mark how luxury will enter families, and make a progress, in spite of principle: being called one morning to breakfast, I found it in a china bowl, with a spoon of silver! They had been bought for me without my knowledge by my wife, and had cost her the enormous sum of three-and-twenty shillings, for which she had no other excuse or apology to make, but that she thought *her* husband deserved a silver spoon and china bowl as well as any of his neighbors. This was the first appearance of plate and china in our house which afterward, in a course of years, as our wealth increased, augmented gradually to several hundred pounds in value.

Many and many of the simplest episodes reveal how shrewd, penetrating, and, above all, how clear-headed he invariably was. Such, for example, is shown in the hour that he was listening to the great evangelist Whitefield, when, while all his other auditors were being thrilled by the speaker's eloquence, Franklin was backing away from him step by step, in order to estimate how far his voice would carry and thus to verify the newspaper accounts of his having preached to twenty-five thousand people in the fields. Franklin went away full of admiration for the preacher's voice, but with no word of comment on his sermon. He went often to hear Whitefield, but always as a very human public speaker and never as a "divine." A biographer, even one

of his associates, could not have known many of the intimate facts that Franklin included, and he would almost surely have left out other details as irrelevant or impertinent. Franklin himself, in contrast, wrote the things which still clung in his old man's memory and which must have been important to his development, or he would have forgotten them.

**Its honesty.** Another striking feature of the "Autobiography" is its honesty, for he did not hesitate to record happen-



EARLY VIEW OF UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Founded by Franklin

ings which revealed defects in his character—defects which nine out of ten admiring biographers would have been inclined to omit or even actually to cover up. Franklin knew that his life had not been all admirable, that many times it had not been above reproach; but, all things considered, he was willing to let it stand for what it was. In consequence, if one reads his story as honestly as Franklin wrote it,—and few people do,—it will appear that not only was he disorderly and unmethodical but that he was not always truthful, that he was sometimes unscrupulous in business, and that he was at times self-indulgent and immoral. Franklin was much too human not to have had his faults; and he was much too honest in his old age to gloss them over.

**Franklin's religion.** The truth is that Franklin was like other people in being a combination of virtues and defects. He was unlike other people in having extraordinary talents and virtues and in owning up to his defects. For the two great "errata" of his life—the use of money intrusted to him for Mr. Vernon, and his unfaithfulness while in London to Miss Read, his betrothed—he afterward made the fullest possible atonement. In his glorification of usefulness at every turn he was at once the greatest expounder and the greatest example of his century. He made a religion of usefulness, putting it into a simple creed which gives less heed to the spirit of worship than many of us need, but far more to the spirit of service than most of us follow:

It is expressed in these words, viz.:

That there is one God, who made all things.

That he governs the world by his providence.

That he ought to be worshipped by adoration, prayer and thanksgiving.

But that the most acceptable service of God is doing good to man.

That the soul is immortal.

And that God will certainly reward virtue and punish vice, either here or hereafter.

In the third of these articles Franklin recommended a worship which he did not practice, but in the fourth he presented a doctrine of service of which his life was a remarkable fulfillment. In his theory of life Franklin seemed to make no claims for the finer emotions, but in his actual citizenship in all its public aspects he was so far above the average man as to serve as a pretty safe "working model" for coming generations. If he had not written this uncompleted life-story we should not know the man as intimately as we do, for to read the "Autobiography" is to read Franklin himself.

**Conclusion.** Since the "Autobiography" brings the story of Franklin only up to 1757, it gives no hint of the Revolutionary struggle, in which as negotiator and diplomat he was hardly less important than was Washington as military leader. The



America presented in these pages is loyal and contented. The rising voices of discomfort from 1765 to 1775, of doubt during the next year, and of decision for revolt in 1776 were all echoed and often stimulated by Franklin in his political writings. Moreover, it is of especial significance in these days to recall another fact unrecorded in his own story—that he was the first American to represent his nation among other nations and that in his feeling for America as a member of the great world family he was a hundred years and more ahead of his countrymen. The new marshaling of forces in 1917 which brought about the celebration of the Fourth of July in London and the arrival of allied American troops in Paris recalled from hour to hour the name of Franklin as our first great international figure.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What are the facts about the college or university training of the writers mentioned in this book previous to Benjamin Franklin?

2. What was educating in Franklin's trade and in the various places in which he followed it while he was a young man?

3. In how many different ways did Franklin contribute to education, using the word both in the special and in the general sense?

4. What influences in Franklin's boyhood and youth tended toward developing him into a common-sense, practical man?

5. What are some of the popular books of today on how to live as a practical man that correspond in some degree with the books Franklin read in his youth?

6. Make a brief list of topics treated in the *Spectator* papers and of poems by Alexander Pope that were concerned with matters of daily living.

7. Who were the successive rulers of England in the seventeenth century, and what violent changes in government took place in 1649, 1660, and 1688? (See Chronological Outlines, pp. 46, 47.)

8. What English influences in Franklin's lifetime tended to lead him into journalism?

9. How did Franklin drill himself in composition, both written and oral, and to what did he compare the ability to write?

10. Note the order of dates and places in the early history of the Almanac. Does this tend to confirm any statement made in Chapter I about authorship in the South during the colonial period?

11. Information on the following questions may be gained from the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters IV and VII:

*a.* What English writer, and what special work of his, did Franklin adopt as a model? How old was Franklin when it was published?

*b.* What English authors whose names are familiar to you were writing during Franklin's lifetime up to the middle of the century?

*c.* How did Franklin aid the spread of literature in the vicinity of Philadelphia?

*d.* What educational institution is a living witness to Franklin's usefulness?

*e.* By the middle of the century, how many colleges had been founded that still exist today? What were they?

*f.* In the fourth column of the Chronological Outlines, the years 1760 to 1770, what facts seem important to you?

*g.* Do you note any advance in science during this decade? Specify.

*h.* By what historical event (French) can you remember the date when Franklin's "Autobiography" was completed?

## CHAPTER VI

### CRÈVECŒUR—THE "AMERICAN FARMER" (1731-1813)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

MICHEL GUILLAUME ST. JEAN DE CRÈVECŒUR. *Letters from an American Farmer*. 1782.

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 60-66. Ginn and Company.

The lowest priced edition is in *Everyman's Library*. W. B. Blake, editor.

The third essay, "What is an American?" is the most important to read.

Is what Crèveçœur wrote about equal opportunity and equal distribution of wealth and privilege as true of America now as it was when he wrote?

What did he write about the facts and the prospects of immigration? Did he prophesy truly?

What new pertinence was there to his definition of an American during the war years 1914-1918?

#### CHAPTER OUTLINE

The contrast between New World and Old World conditions  
Crèveçœur's "Letters from an American Farmer"

His delight in the natural resources of America

His interest in the composite American people

His treatment of nature themes

His confidence in the future of America

His last letter and his last years

Crèveçœur's idealism

**The contrast between New World and Old World conditions.**  
By 1750 the thirteen colonies had all been long established, and the straggling community on the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Georgia had an individuality of its own. The America-to-be

was at once young and old. There were old towns, old churches, old homes, old families. There was an aristocracy with memories that went back to England, but with roots firmly planted in American soil; and yet the country was so vast and the people on it so few that there was unlimited chance for the energetic man of real ability. It was a new land of untold opportunities; all its apparent maturity was the maturity of a well-born young gentleman who has just become of age and whose real career is still before him. The old age of the Old World was something very different; for it was based chiefly on the control of the land—of the actual soil and stream and forest. Edmund Burke, in 1775, said in his "Speech on Conciliation with America" that if the attempt were made to restrict the population of the colonies the people could swarm over the mountain ranges and resettle there in a vast plain *five hundred miles square*. However fair the estimate was to the land in actual English possession, that statement was about as far as the imagination of an Englishman accustomed to smaller areas could then go, or as big a figure as he could dare to hope his fellow members of Parliament would believe; for in those days, as today, there were not in England or France five square miles of land out of ownership, and very little that was not in the possession of a few great proprietors. As the control of government was largely in the same hands, the great mass of the people could neither freely enjoy the fruits of their own labor, which were pitilessly reduced by rents and taxes, nor make any effective peaceful protest against the government. The American Revolution was the voice of the colonies protesting against the possible repetition of such conditions on this side the water, and the French Revolution was the harsh voice of a downtrodden people calling for relief.

Crèvecoeur's "Letters from an American Farmer." No man could better appreciate the promise of life in America than one who had felt the hardships of the old conditions and had then enjoyed the freedom of the new ones. In the same years when the wiser leaders in the colonies were alarmed at the harsh and

mistaken policies of George III and his ministers, a young Frenchman, educated in England, came over to this country, settled and prospered on his own land, and was so delighted with his life as a farmer and a citizen that he could not resist making a record of his happiness. This was Michel Guillaume St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, and his book was the "Letters from an American farmer," published in London in 1782, though written almost entirely before the outbreak of the Revolution. It is made up of twelve so-called letters addressed to an imaginary English friend. Two of these are about his direct experience on his own acres in the middle colonies; five are on the people and the country in northern colonies, as he found them in Marthas Vineyard, at Nantucket, and on Cape Cod; one is drawn from what he saw

in South Carolina; and the other four are less related to definite places, three being on nature themes and one—the most important of all—on the ever new question "What is an American?"

**His delight in the natural resources of America.** With industry and thrift hardly less than Franklin's, Crèvecoeur had also a poetic mind and fresh enthusiasm. He was writing from what was to him a kind of earthly paradise. Seen against the background of unhappy France, the rights to own, to earn, and to have a voice in the government seemed almost too good to be true. He had no mistaken ideas about the hard labor needed to make a farm productive; but he enjoyed work because he



CRÈVECŒUR



knew that he could enjoy the fruits of it, and he enjoyed it all the more because he knew that in making an ear of corn grow where none had grown before he was the best kind of pioneer.

He felt a perfect satisfaction in his own state of mind and body. Although he was a newcomer, he had a sense of belonging to the district as complete as Emerson, with two centuries of local ancestry, was later to have; and, with a pride equal to Emerson's in "Hamatreya," could "affirm, my actions smack of the soil." With his baby boy ingeniously rigged before him on the plow, he reckoned the increase of his fields, herds, flocks,—even his hives,—and acknowledged his inferiority "only to the Emperor of China, ploughing as an example to his kingdom." Then, looking beyond his own little acreage, he hinted at future industries. He was tilling the surface; there must be further treasures below. He and his neighbors were weaving the natural wool; some chemist must make and prepare colors. Commerce must follow on the heels of abundant production; "the avenues of trade are infinite." And in time the deep vast of the West, about which men had yet such feeble and timid fancies, must be explored in its turn.

Here we have, in some measure, regained the ancient dignity of our species: our laws are simple and just; we are a race of cultivators; our cultivation is unrestrained, and therefore everything is prosperous and flourishing. For my part I had rather admire the ample barn of one of our opulent farmers, who himself felled the first tree in his plantation, and was first founder of his settlement, than study the dimension of the temple of Ceres. I had rather record the progressive steps of this industrious farmer, throughout all the stages of his labor and other operations, than examine how modern Italian convents can be supported without doing anything but singing and praying.

**His interest in the composite American people.** Moreover, above all the material resources of field, forest, and mountain, he was glad for the human stream which was flowing into America to fertilize them. The thrifty people who were shrewd and bold enough to come over from Great Britain and northern

Europe were to profit by nature's gifts, and in the experience were to be welded "into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared." If it is fair to say that the history of immigration to America falls into three general periods, Crèvecoeur was writing about the very midst of the middle period, from 1675 to 1875. First had been a half-century when only the strongest spirit of adventure or the strongest desire for freedom could impel men to attempt the conquest of an untried world. Every Englishman who came over and every American born here was conscious of the need of more hands to work, and all were eager for more Englishmen, and yet more, to help in the great project. On the other hand, in the last forty years, with the farm land all taken up and the factories manned, the millions who have flooded in, not alone from England or Great Britain but mainly from southern Europe and the Near East, have arrived as new mouths to feed. The problem has been not so much how they could help America as how America could take care of them; and with their arrival a feeling of perplexity and alarm has arisen such as was expressed in 1892 by Thomas Bailey Aldrich in his "Unguarded Gates":

. . . Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,  
And through them presses a wild motley throng—  
Men from the Volga and the Tartar steppes,  
Featureless figures of the Hoang-Ho,  
Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt, and Slav,  
Flying the Old World's poverty and scorn;  
These bringing with them unknown gods and rites,  
Those, tiger passions here to stretch their claws.  
In street and alley what strange tongues are loud,  
Accents of menace alien to our air,  
Voices that once the Tower of Babel knew!

O Liberty, white Goddess! is it well  
To leave the gates unguarded?  
Have a care  
Lest from thy brow the clustered stars be torn  
And trampled in the dust. . . .

But Crèvecoeur was living between these two periods. The first conquest of the Eastern woods and fields had been made. America was known to be a land of plenty, and as yet there was more than plenty for all the newcomers from England and the neighboring countries of northern Europe. There seemed to be no limit to its resources. And so he wrote:

What, then, is the American, this new man? He is either a European, or the descendant of a European: hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family, whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a Frenchwoman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great "alma mater." Here individuals are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigor and industry, which began long since in the East. They will finish the great circle.

**His treatment of nature themes.** There was an artistic strain in this man who could so easily kindle with enthusiasm and who could express his enthusiasms with such rhythmic eloquence. The special subjects on which he could best vent his poetic powers were found in his passages, and his occasional whole chapters, on nature themes—in particular the letters on "John Bartram, Botanist," and "The Snakes and the Humming Bird." In these it is impossible to escape the resemblances between this early naturalist and his successor Thoreau (see pages 212–221). While neither was a scientist in the strict sense of the word, neither was content to dismiss nature subjects with mere words of general appreciation. Both were interested enough to observe in detail and to record with some exactness the ways of plants, flowers, birds, and insects; but both were at their

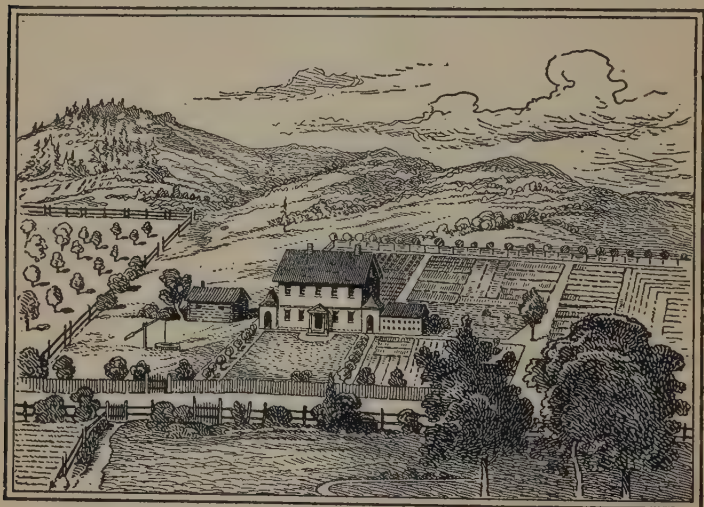
best when they were giving way to the real zest they had in the enjoyment of the out-of-doors.

Who can listen unmoved to the sweet love-tales of our robins, told from tree to tree, or to the shrill cat-birds? The sublime accents of the thrush, from on high, always retard my steps, that I may listen to the delicious music. . . . The astonishing art which all birds display in the construction of their nests, ill-provided as we may suppose them with proper tools, their neatness, their convenience, always make me ashamed of the slovenliness of our houses. Their love to their dame, their incessant, careful attention, and the peculiar songs they address to her while she tediously incubates their eggs, remind me of my duty, could I ever forget it. Their affection to their helpless little ones is a lovely precept; and, in short, the whole economy of what we call the brute creation, is admirable in every circumstance; and vain man, though adorned with the additional gift of reason, might learn from the perfection of instinct, how to regulate the follies, and how to temper the errors, which this second gift often makes him commit. . . . I have often blushed within myself, and been greatly astonished, when I have compared the unerring path they all follow,—all just, all proper, all wise, up to the necessary degree of perfection—with the coarse, the imperfect, systems of men.

For generations the beauties of nature had held small place in English literature, because the English men of letters were a completely citified set of writers, and in America nature's charms had not found their way into books, partly because England gave American writers no reminder and partly because nature in America had been chiefly something to struggle with.

**His confidence in the future of America.** So enthusiastic was Crèveçœur over conditions in America, and so certain was he that they never would be disturbed in any unfortunate way, that the twentieth-century reader looks over his pre-Revolution pages with a kind of wistful impatience. About many aspects of American life Crèveçœur was keenly prophetic. Throughout eleven of the letters, evidently written before 1775, he continued in an exalted and confident mood. Whether he was

presenting the "provincial situations, manners and customs" of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, or of the central Atlantic, or of the Southern colonies, his senses and his judgment were equally satisfied. Industry prevailed. The wilderness was being converted into towns, farms, and highways. "A pleasing uniformity of decent competence" was a rule of the democracy.



RESIDENCE OF CRÈVECŒUR NEAR CORNWALL, NEW YORK, 1778

The indulgent laws were fair to the laborer and the voter. He seemed to feel that the era of prosperity would last till the end of the world. His vision of the future was the vision of a man perched in the small end of an infinite horn of plenty, with a vista unclouded by the hint of any limit to the supply or of any possible conflict between gluttony and hunger.

In fact, along the whole coast there was only one practice which presented a disturbing social problem, and that was the institution of slavery. Against this, which existed both North and South, Crèveœur protested just as Samuel Sewall and John Woolman had done before him, and as Timothy



Dwight and Joel Barlow in Connecticut and William Pinkney and other lawmakers and abolitionists in Maryland and Virginia were to do soon after him. Yet, however sincere he was, he regarded slavery as a surface defect rather than as a national danger. It was a mistake, but not a menace. Crèvecoeur's unquestioning confidence in the prospect was like that of many a later American. The belief in a glorious future for America, which has been an inspiration to all who would work for it, has been demoralizing to hosts of others who have been nothing more than lazy believers in it.

**His last letter and his last years.** With the twelfth letter came a total change. It was evidently written long after all the others, after the outburst of war, perhaps after his New Jersey property had been burned, possibly even during his return voyage to France in the autumn of 1780. As a naturalized subject of King George, when well on in middle life he had been forced to choose between his sworn allegiance and the interests of his fellow colonists. He sympathized with the American cause, though he did not enlist. And then in the years that followed he learned (the unfailing lesson of war time) of the "vanity of human wishes." Unhappily for the moral of the tale, the latter part of his life was far from heroic. In the concluding letter, written quite after the fashion of the most sentimental and unreal eighteenth-century nature-lovers, Crèvecoeur decided to abandon the struggle in the war zone and to take up life anew with his family among the Indians in the West. He would forswear all talk of politics, "contemplate nature in her most wild and ample extent," and formulate among his adopted neighbors a new system of happiness. As a matter of fact, however, his retreat was even more complete than this; for he returned permanently to the Continent, lived contentedly in Paris, London, and Munich, and married his daughter to a French count.

**Crèvecoeur's idealism.** Although such a turn of events resulted in very much of an anticlimax, this fact should not make one forget the prophetic quality in his "Letters," nor should

his failure to predict every aspect of modern life throw a shadow on the clearness with which he foretold some of the most important of them. It is true, of course, that he did not appreciate how tragic were to be the fruits of slavery; that he saw immigration only as a desirable supply of labor to a continent which could never be overpopulated; that, writing before the earliest chapter of the factory era, he did not dream of the industrial problems of the present. But when he said that the American, sprung from Europe but here adopted into a new nation, "ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born," he was saying something that has been repeated with new emphasis ten thousand times since the outbreak of the World War. And when he declared that "the American is a new man, who acts upon new principles," he was talking far in advance of his day and perhaps of our day. The chance of a nation's being too proud to fight at the first provocation, and the thought that international interests are more important than the interests of any member of the family of nations—this is the language of the principles that Crèvecoeur was calling for. It is nearly a century and a half since he tried to answer the question "What is an American?" Much has happened since then. Internally the country has developed to the extent of his farthest dreams, and in the world family, after three great wars, it has become one of the greatest of the powers, fulfilling so much of his predictions that one speculates in all humility on what may be the next steps "for that new race of men whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Were Crèvecoeur's problems as an American farmer similar to those of an American farmer today?
2. State briefly Crèvecoeur's definition of an American.
3. Read the opening chapters or divisions of Thoreau's "Walden," and compare his views with those of Crèvecoeur on property; on labor; on citizenship. Which do you regard as the better citizen?

4. What are some of the industrial problems not foreseen by Crèvecoeur?

5. How have Crèvecoeur's prophecies about mining, chemistry, commerce, and Western expansion been fulfilled?

6. What are some of the immigration problems not foreseen by Crèvecoeur?

7. Do country-bred people usually love the beauties of nature?

8. For information on the following and similar points see the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapter VII:

*a.* What two important American men of letters were born in the decade in which Crèvecoeur's "Letters" were published?

*b.* What important historical event occurred in the same year with their publication?

*c.* How many years later was the first president of the United States inaugurated?

*d.* At this time did Spain have any territory in what is now the United States? Where?

*e.* What great conflict was beginning in France toward the end of this decade?

*f.* By how many states was the Constitution ratified?

## CHAPTER VII

### THE POETRY OF THE REVOLUTION AND PHILIP FRENEAU (1752-1832)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

FRANCIS HOPKINSON. *A Pretty Story* (1774); *The Battle of the Kegs* (1779); *Song; My Generous Heart Disdains*.

Other prose and verse as found in the following collections:

BOYNTON, P. H. *American Poetry*, pp. 35-42. Charles Scribner's Sons.

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 67-77. Ginn and Company.

CAIRNS, W. B. *Early American Writers*, pp. 372-383. The Macmillan Company.

In reading the "Pretty Story" see how far you can understand the historical references and how far you can understand their appeal to the colonists in the exciting days of 1774. What is the reason for the abrupt ending?

How does the form of "The Battle of the Kegs" compare with that of "The Day of Doom"? Which is more appropriate in form? Does Hopkinson try to be fair and accurate?

Notice the form and tone of the shorter songs. Which are the more natural expression for Hopkinson, these or the war poems?

JOHN TRUMBULL. *M'Fingal*. 1782.

Third canto most interesting. Passages as found in the following collections:

BOYNTON. *American Poetry*, pp. 43-57.

BOYNTON. *Milestones*, pp. 78-86.

CAIRNS. *Early Writers*, pp. 395-408.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 141-146. Ginn and Company.

As a war satire do you feel that "M'Fingal" is more or less interesting than "A Pretty Story"? What are your reasons?

PHILIP FRENEAU. *The Midnight Consultation*, *A Prophecy*, *The Progress of Balloons*, *Literary Importation*, *Ode on the Frigate Constitution*, *The Wild Honey Suckle*, *The Indian Burying Ground*, *To a Caty-did*.

Other poems as found in the following collections :

BOYNTON. *American Poetry*, pp. 89-118.

BOYNTON. *Milestones*, pp. 87-98.

CAIRNS. *Early Writers*, pp. 431-448.

CALHOUN and MACALARNEY. *Readings*, pp. 135-141.

STEDMAN, E. C. *An American Anthology*, pp. 3-8. Houghton Mifflin Company.

In the more good-natured satires, like "A Prophecy," "The Progress of Balloons," and "Literary Importation," note the rhythm used and its appropriateness.

Note the complete contrast in subject matter and in poetic form between the last four poems listed above and those earlier in the list. Which group are more genuinely poetical, and why?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

The abundance of Revolutionary War literature

The essays and songs of Francis Hopkinson

The satires of John Trumbull

"The Progress of Dulness"—a social satire

"M'Fingal"—a political satire

Philip Freneau—his life

His bitter war poetry

His poems on the future of America

His poems on American nature and American tradition

His revolt from foreign models

His simplicity of expression

Summary on Freneau

Summary of Chapters I-VII

**The abundance of Revolutionary War literature.** With the Revolution there was even more than the usual amount of war literature in America, for seldom have the principles of a war been more fully discussed at the time. Pamphlets debating the issues, official State papers, plays (with prologues and epilogues), songs, ballads, and satires in prose and verse, were all contributed during the years of the war, and diaries, letters, and journals have later swelled the total. No one can fully understand the Revolution or the period after it who does not read a great deal of this material; yet the prose and most of



the verse are important as history rather than as literature. Of the scores of writers who were producing while Franklin was an aging man and while Crèvecoeur was an American farmer, Francis Hopkinson and John Trumbull deserve brief comment, and Philip Freneau merits the honor of representative-in-chief of the Revolutionary War literature.

**The essays and songs of Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791).** Francis Hopkinson, the Philadelphian, was once well described in a much-quoted passage from John Adams to his wife, in August, 1776:

At this shop I met Mr. Francis Hopkinson, late a mandamus councillor of New Jersey, now a member of the Continental Congress, who . . . was liberally educated and is a painter and a poet. I have a curiosity to penetrate a little deeper into the bosom of this curious gentleman. . . . He is one of your pretty little curious, ingenious men. . . . I have not met with anything more amusing and entertaining in natural history than his personal appearance—yet he is genteel and well-bred and is very social. I wish I had leisure and tranquillity of mind to amuse myself with those elegant and ingenious arts of painting, sculpture, statuary, architecture and music. But I have not.

Hopkinson's writings show that the comments of his sober critic were not unfounded, for they are clearly the work of an all-round man of the world rather than of a devoted and single-minded artist. Yet part of their significance lies in this very fact, since Hopkinson is one of the earliest examples in America of such many-sided culture. He had, too, virtues of character to offset the intellectual talents half enviously referred to by the rugged Bostonian. He was a learned judge, a stalwart Revolutionist, a practical man of affairs, and a humorist.

His collected writings in three volumes were done in the best manner of eighteenth-century England. Five sixths of them are essays of the *Spectator* type. Three prose satires—"A Pretty Story" (1774), "A Prophecy" (1776), and "The New Roof" (1778)—are as important a trio as any written by one

man in the Revolutionary days. The other sixth of his writings — his verse — belonged no less to the polite literature of the period. There are Miltonic imitations, songs, sentiments, hymns, a fable, and a piece of advice to a young lady. There are occasional poems,<sup>1</sup> including birthday and wedding greetings, dramatic prologues and epilogues, elegies,<sup>2</sup> and rimed epitaphs. Verses of these kinds, if they were all Hopkinson had written, would prove that he was a hopeless slave to prevailing English fashions. But Hopkinson was nobody's vassal. When he wrote in protest at the high-flown language of most love songs,

My generous heart disdains  
The slave of love to be,  
I scorn his servile chains,  
And boast my liberty,

he might as truly have asserted his refusal to submit to any sort of trammels except at his own choice. He poured the new wine of Revolutionary sentiment into a few imitation ballads, one of which, "The Battle of the Kegs," with its mocking jollity, put good cheer in all colonial hearts in the times that tried men's souls. It was his genial self-control, the quality of heroism without pomposity, that set Hopkinson off in contrast with his fellows. He was almost the least pretentious of them all; yet few were more effective.

**The satires of John Trumbull (1750-1831).** John Trumbull tried his hand, like Hopkinson, at the conventional poetical subjects, but the bulk of his verse, in contrast to Hopkinson's, was contained in two long satirical essays, "The Progress of Dulness" (1772 and 1773) and "M'Fingal" (1776 and 1782). Apparently he was satisfied to imitate, and had no further ambition for himself or other American poets than to

<sup>1</sup> An occasional poem is a poem written in celebration of a definite occasion. The commonest kinds are those written just after great events and those written for anniversaries.

<sup>2</sup> An elegy is a meditative lyric poem suggested by the fact or the thought of death.

bid their lays with lofty Milton vie;  
 Or wake from nature's themes the moral song,  
 And shine with Pope, with Thompson and with Young.  
 This land her Swift and Addison shall view,  
 The former honors equalled by the new;  
 Here shall some Shakespeare charm the rising age,  
 And hold in magic chains the listening stage;  
 A second Watts shall strike the heavenly lyre,  
 And other muses other bards inspire.

"The Progress of Dulness"—a social satire. Nevertheless, in these two satires he wrote from a non-English point of view,



A FRONT VIEW OF YALE COLLEGE AND THE  
 COLLEGE CHAPEL IN 1789

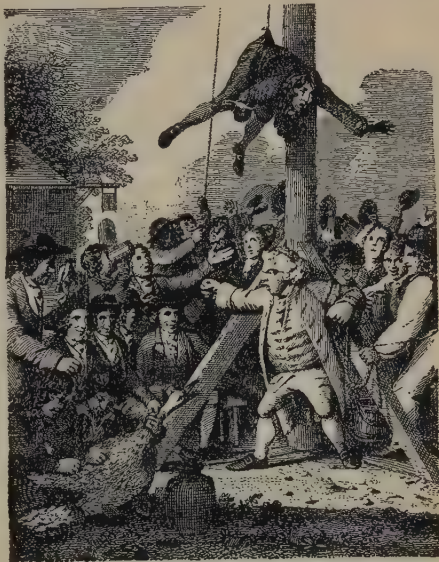
first as a Connecticut man and then as a citizen of the new republic. "The Progress of Dulness" is a treatise on how not to bring up children. It offers for its examples Tom Brainless, Dick Hair-brain, and Harriet Simper. It puts the boys through college (Trumbull was a graduate of Yale), making

one a dull preacher and the other a rake. Harriet is fed on flattery, social ambition, and the romantic novels of the day and, so trained, becomes a common flirt, who, thrown over by Dick, sinks into obscurity as the faded wife of Parson Tom. This was homemade satire, democratic in its choice and treatment of character and clearly located in and about New Haven, Connecticut.

"M'Fingal"—a political satire. So also, and much more pointedly, was the rimed political tract "M'Fingal" an immensely popular attack on the Tory of the Revolution—his attitude, his general behavior, and his methods of argument.

It relates the events of a day in a New England town which was split between the rival parties at the outset of the war, and describes in detail the ways in which this particularly hateful Tory was driven to cover. The modern reader must bring to it a good deal of student interest if he expects to complete the

reading and understand it, even with the aid of Trumbull's copious footnotes. For the moment it was a skillful piece of argumentative writing. Trumbull knew how to appeal to the popular prejudices; he knew how to draw on their limited store of general knowledge; and he knew how to lead them on with puns and multiple rimes<sup>1</sup> and a judicious resort to rough joking and abuse. "M'Fingal" was war literature, with all its defects of passion, unfairness, and false reasoning, but the twenty



THE HUMILIATION OF M'FINGAL

From Poems of John Trumbull, 1820

or more editions through which it ran before 1800 are evidence that it reached the low mark at which it was aimed. If it had the faults of its kind, so in later years did "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

**Philip Freneau—his life (1752–1832).** The most representative poet of the Revolutionary period was Philip Freneau, who was active in authorship for forty-five years, from 1770

<sup>1</sup>A multiple rime is a rime of three or more syllables: articles, particles; Mexican, lexicon; word in it, preferred in it; enthúsiasm, if you chóose he has 'em.

on. He was a graduate of Princeton College in 1771, gained a sudden reputation as a political satirist in 1775, and lived a strangely varied life from then till well into the nineteenth century. For three years he lived in Santa Cruz and Bermuda. In 1779 he sailed to the Azores, and for a six-year period at a later time he was engaged in Atlantic-coast trade. From 1784 to 1807 he went the circle in five stages as editor, seaman, editor, farmer, and seaman again. Everything he did he seems to have done hard, and nothing held him long. It is a kind of life which does not seem surprising in a man who has often been called "Poet of the Revolution," for he wrote as vigorously as he sailed or farmed or edited, and he plowed his political satires quite as deep and straight as he plowed the seas and the furrows of his fields. After his bitter experience of three months on a British prison ship, he blazed out with a fierce flame of verse which has carried the horrors of this particular form of war brutality down the centuries to greet the "atrocities" of the World War. When the editors of rival papers and rival parties annoyed him, he retorted with a savageness of attack which was notable even in a day when newspaper-writers did not know any restraint or recognize any standard of good manners. Freneau had at least one title to the friendship of Dr. Samuel Johnson, who loved "a good hater," and he did not keep his hating to himself, as many a man who stirred his wrath found out.

**Freneau's bitter war poetry.** This relish for fighting resulted in a good deal of war poetry, which would be remembered—or forgotten—with the best of the rest of its kind if it were all that he had written. In a chapter like this it can therefore serve the double purpose of illustrating the verse of the Revolution and of representing a less important aspect of his whole work. In this respect it is comparable to the Civil War and antislavery poetry of Whittier. Sometimes this verse is full of scorn, as in "The Midnight Consultation," in which Lord Howe is ridiculed as presiding over a council which arrives at the following heroic conclusion:



Three weeks—ye gods!—nay, three long years it seems  
 Since *roast beef* I have touched, except in dreams,  
 In sleep, choice dishes to my view repair,  
 Waking, I gape and champ the empty air,—

. . . . .  
 On neighbouring isles uncounted cattle stray,  
 Fat beeves, and swine, an ill-defended prey—  
 These are fit victims for my noonday dish,  
 These, if my soldiers act as I would wish,  
 In one short week should glad your maws and mine;  
 On mutton we will sup—on roast beef dine.

Sometimes it is full of the hate which war always breeds. Freneau wrote no more bitterly about the king, Lord North, and the leading generals in active service against the colonists than did Jonathan Odell—the foremost Tory satirist—about Washington and his associates. As the war went on, and the likelihood of American success became stronger, Freneau's tone softened as he could well afford to have it, and in such a product as "The Political Balance" he wrote with nothing more disagreeable than the mockery of a rather unsportsmanlike winner. This poem, characterized by well-maintained humor, is one of the best of its kind. It represents Jove as one day looking over the book of



CRUELTY PRESIDING OVER THE PRISON SHIP

From Barlow's "Columbiad," 1807

Fate and as coming to an incomplete account of Britain, for the Fates had neglected to reveal the outcome of the war. In order to find out for himself, he directs Vulcan to make an exact model of the globe, borrows the scales from Virgo, and plans to foretell the future by setting the mother country on one side and the States on the other. When, after many difficulties, the experiment is tried, of course the States overbalance the little island. Then, to be fair to England, he adds the British foreign possessions on her side of the balance scale.

But the gods were confounded and struck with surprise,  
And Vulcan could hardly believe his own eyes!

For (such was the purpose and guidance of fate)  
Her foreign dominions diminish'd her weight—  
By which it appeared, to Britain's disaster,  
Her foreign possessions were changing their master.

Then as he replac'd them, said Jove with a smile—  
"Columbia shall never be rul'd by an isle—  
But vapours and darkness around her shall rise,  
And tempests conceal her a while from our eyes;

"So locusts in Egypt their squadrons display,  
And rising, disfigure the face of the day;  
So the moon, at her full, has a frequent eclipse,  
And the sun in the ocean diurnally dips.

"Then cease your endeavors, ye vermin of Britain—  
(And here, in derision, their island he spit on)  
'Tis madness to seek what you never can find,  
Or think of uniting what nature disjoin'd;

"But still you may flutter awhile with your wings,  
And spit out your venom, and brandish your stings,  
Your hearts are as black, and as bitter as gall,  
A curse to yourselves, and a blot on the Ball."

Freneau's poems on the future of America. After the war it was only natural that Americans should imagine the glorious future that awaited their new independence. The more vivid their imaginations were, the more splendid were the prophecies they indulged in. As we read over the records of their lofty hopes we are reminded of commencement oratory; and the likeness is not unreal, for these post-Revolution poets were in fact very like eager graduates, diploma in hand, looking forward to vague but splendid careers. It was in these poems, too, that the germs of Fourth of July oratory first took root—the oratory described by James Fenimore Cooper in his "Home as Found" (chap. xxi):



HESPER APPEARING TO COLUMBUS IN PRISON

From Barlow's "Columbiad," 1807

There were the usual allusions to Greece and Rome, between the republics of which and that of this country there exists some such affinity as is to be found between a horse-chestnut and a chestnut horse, or that of mere words; and a long catalogue of national glories that might very well have sufficed for all republics, both of antiquity and of our own time. But when the orator came to speak of the American character, and particularly of the intelligence of the nation, he was most felicitous, and made the largest investments in popularity. According to his account of the matter, no other people possessed a tithe of the knowledge, or a hundredth part of the honesty and virtue of the very community he was addressing; and after laboring for ten minutes to convince his hearers

that they already knew everything, he wasted several more in trying to persuade them to undertake further acquisitions.

Freneau had shared all this prophetic enthusiasm, and had expressed it even before the war, partly in an actual commencement poem on "The Rising Glory of America" and partly in a series of eighteen "Pictures of Columbus." Just after his college graduation he had written:

I see, I see  
A thousand Kingdoms rais'd, cities and men  
Num'rous as sand upon the ocean shore;  
Th' Ohio then shall glide by many a town  
Of note; and where the Mississippi stream  
By forests shaded now runs weeping on,  
Nations shall grow, and States not less in fame  
Than Greece and Rome of old; we too shall boast  
Our Alexanders, Pompeys, heroes, kings,  
That in the womb of time yet dormant lye  
Waiting the joyful hour of life and light.

After the war, however, he did not rejoin the growing choir who chanted this kind of choral. His most interesting bit of prophecy has been surprisingly fulfilled within the last few years. This is "The Progress of Balloons," written in the tone and measure of the "Political Balance":

. . . . The stagemen, whose gallopers scarce have the power  
Through the dirt to convey you ten miles in an hour,  
When advanc'd to balloons shall so furiously drive  
You'll hardly know whether you're dead or alive.  
The man who at Boston sets out with the sun,  
If the wind should be fair, may be with us at one,  
At Gunpowder Ferry drink whiskey at three  
And at six be at Edentown, ready for tea.  
(The machine shall be order'd, we hardly need say,  
To travel in darkness as well as by day)  
At Charleston by ten he for sleep shall prepare,  
And by twelve the next day be the devil knows where.

. . . . .

If Britain should ever disturb us again,  
 (As they threaten to do in the next George's reign)  
 No doubt they will play us a set of new tunes,  
 And pepper us well from their fighting balloons.

. . . . .

Such wonders as these from balloons shall arise—  
 And the giants of old, that assaulted the skies  
 With their Ossa on Pelion, shall freely confess  
 That all they attempted was nothing to this.

This, of course, was newspaper poetry, and Freneau, for long years of his life, was a newspaper man. Even his lines "To Sir Toby" are in effect an open letter in protest against human slavery, and they were printed in the *National Gazette* in 1792.

**Freneau's poems on American nature and American tradition.** The really poetical works of Freneau, however, had nothing to do with political or military events of the day. They were his shorter lyrics<sup>1</sup> on American nature and American tradition; and a distinguishing feature of them was that they were different from the English poetry of the time in form as well as in content. As a young man Freneau had set out on his career by writing after the style of Milton and Dryden and Pope and their lesser imitators. This was absolutely natural. Until after the Revolution, America was England, and it was more nearly like England in speech and in thought than much of Scotland and Ireland are today. All the refinements of America were derived from English sources; practically all the colonists' reading was from English authors.

**Freneau's revolt from foreign models.** But after the Revolution there came a strong reaction of feeling. We can look to Freneau's own words (journalistic ones again) for an explanation of the new and native quality of his later verse; they are called "Literary Importation," and they conclude as follows:

<sup>1</sup> A lyric is a short poem, songlike or tuneful in quality and expressing (in contrast to a ballad) the feeling of the composer or singer. Among the more common kinds are lyrics which express the emotions that go with love, mourning, work, worship, war, and patriotism.



It seems we had spirit to humble a throne,  
Have genius for science inferior to none,  
But hardly encourage a plant of our own :  
    If a college be planned  
    'Tis all at a stand  
'Till to Europe we send at a shameful expense,  
To send us a bookworm to teach us some sense.

Can we never be thought to have learning or grace  
Unless it be brought from that horrible place  
Where tyranny reigns with her impudent face ;  
    And popes and pretenders  
    And sly faith-defenders  
Have ever been hostile to reason and wit,  
Enslaving a world that shall conquer them yet.

'Tis a folly to fret at the picture I draw :  
And I say what was said by a Doctor Magraw ;  
"If they give us their Bishops, they'll give us their law."  
    How that will agree  
    With such people as we,  
Let us leave to the learned to reflect on awhile,  
And say what they think in a handsomer stile.

As a consequence of this feeling that America should be different, the tendency grew to seek out native subject matter and to avoid imitation of English literary models. For the next half century American authors were saying, every now and then, that they ought to be writing on American subjects, and a good deal of verse and prose was written with this idea in mind. Most of it was more conscientious than interesting, for literature to be genuinely effective must be produced not to demonstrate a theory but to express what is honestly in the author's mind. The first step toward achieving nationality in American writing was, therefore, to arrive at new and independent habits of national thinking. The Irish mind, for example, is altogether different from the English mind, and Irish literature has therefore a long and beautiful history of

its own, in spite of the fact that Ireland is near to England and was subject to it for centuries. But the Australian is simply a transplanted English-speaking, English-thinking mind, and Australia as a separate dominion has consequently produced no separate literature. Now Freneau was a naturally independent thinker. He was educated and well-read in the best of English and classical literature. But, unlike most of his fellow authors, he was not a city man, nor a teacher, preacher, or lawyer. His hands were hardened by the steersman's wheel and the plow, and doubtless much of his verse—or at least the inspiration for it—came to him on shipboard or in the field rather than in the library. In the midst of the crowd he was an easy man to stir up to fighting pitch. All his war verse shows this.

**Freneau's simplicity of expression.** Yet when he was alone and undisturbed he was inclined to fall into meditation, and he expressed himself in the simplest ways. As a young man he wrote a little lyric "On Retirement." It is the kind of thing that many other eighteenth-century poets—confirmed city-dwellers—wrote in moments of temporary world-weariness; but Freneau's life-story shows that he really meant it:

A cottage I could call my own  
Remote from domes of care:  
A little garden, wall'd with stone,  
The wall with ivy overgrown,  
A limpid fountain near,  
Would more substantial joys afford,  
More real bliss impart  
Than all the wealth that misers hoard,  
Than vanquish'd world, or worlds restor'd—  
Mere cankers of the heart!

And there was another poem of his youth which told a secret of his real character. This was "The Power of Fancy," an imitation of Milton in its form, but genuinely Freneau's in its sentiment. The best of his later work is really a compound of

these suggestions—poems of fancy composed in retirement. Thus he wrote on "The Indian Burying Ground," interpreting the fact that

The Indian, when from life released,  
Again is seated with his friends  
And shares again the joyous feast,

instead of being buried recumbent as white men are. And thus he wrote in "To a Caty-did," "The Wild Honey Suckle," and "To a Honey Bee," little lyrics of nature and natural life, which were almost the first verse produced in America based on native subject matter and expressed in simple, direct, and unpretentious form.

Nathaniel Ames, in one of his early almanacs, recorded soberly:

Now Winters rage abates, now chearful Hours  
Awake the Spring, and Spring awakes the Flowers.  
The opening Buds salute the welcome Day,  
And Earth relenting, feels the genial Ray.  
The Blossoms blow, the Birds on Bushes sing;  
And Nature has accomplish'd all the Spring.

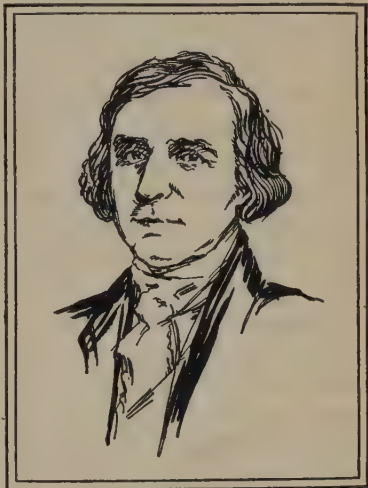
This was perfectly conventional and perfectly indefinite; not a single flower, bud, blossom, bird, or bush is specified. The six lines amount to a general formula for spring and would apply equally well to Patagonia, Italy, New England, or northern Siberia. Mr. R. Lewis, who wrote on "A Journey from Patapsco to Annapolis" in 1730, improves on this:

First born of *Spring*, here the *Pacone* appears.  
Whose golden Root a silver Blossom rears.  
In spreading Tufts see there the *Crowfoot*, blue,  
On whose green Leaves still shines a globous Dew;  
Behold the *Cinque-foil*, with its dazling Dye  
Of flaming Yellow, wounds the tender Eye.  
But there enclos'd the grassy Wheat is seen  
To heal the aching Sight with cheerful Green.

Lewis mentions definite flowers, colors, and characteristics, but he never misses a chance to tuck in a conventional adjective or participle, and he is led by them into weaving the extravagant fancy of an eye made to ache by flaming and dazzling colors, and healed by the cheerful green of the wheat field. In contrast to these, Freneau's little nature poems are as exact as the second and as simple as the subject on which he writes:

In a branch of willow hid  
Sings the evening Caty-did:  
From the lofty locust bough  
Feeding on a drop of dew,  
In her suit of green array'd  
Hear her singing in the shade  
Caty-did, Caty-did, Caty-did!

Such simplicity as this does not seem at all remarkable today, but when compared with the fixed formalities that belonged to almost all the verse of Freneau's time, it stands out as a remarkable exception.



PHILIP FRENEAU

**Summary on Freneau.** On account of the two kinds of poetry which Freneau published he has often been given misleading titles by his admirers. Those who have been interested in him mainly or solely from the historical point of view have christened him the "Poet of the American Revolution." This is unfair because of the implication that he gave his best energy to this and had no other right to distinction. Even as a journalist he was more than poet of the Revolution, since he wrote on local and timely themes for many years after its close. It does not claim enough for him. The other title is defective for the opposite reason—that it claims too much. This is the "Father of American Poetry." Such a sweeping phrase ought to be avoided resolutely. It is doubly false, in suggesting that there

was no American poetry before he wrote and that everything since has descended from him. The facts are that he had a native poetic gift which would have led to his writing poetry had there never been a war between the colonies and England; but that when the war came on he was one of the most effective penmen on his side; that entrance into the field of public affairs diverted him from the paths of quiet life; that after the war he continued both kinds of writing. He never wholly ceased to think and write about "affairs," but more and more he dreamed of the future, recalled the picturesque past, and played with themes of graceful and tender sentiment. He is very well worth reading as a commentator on his own times, and he is no less worth reading for the beauty of many poems quite without reference to the time or place in which they were written.

**Summary of Chapters I to VII.** The long and fruitful colonial period must not be overlooked by any honest student of American literature; yet it may fairly be regarded as no more than a preparatory stage. It has the same relationship to the whole story as do ancestry, boyhood, and education to the development of an individual. In the broad and brief survey attempted in these chapters a few leading facts have been reviewed about the youth of America: (1) Everything characteristic of the early settlers was derived directly from England, the traits of the South representing the aristocratic traditions of king and court, and those of the North reflecting the democratic revolt of the Puritans. As a natural consequence of the differences in settlement, the writing of books soon waned in Virginia and the neighboring colonies, but developed consistently in Massachusetts and New England. (2) The attempt of the Puritans to force all New Englanders to think the same thoughts and worship in the same way was unsuccessful from the start, and the most interesting writers of the seventeenth century reveal the spread of disturbing influences. The first three chosen as examples are Thomas Morton, the frank and unscrupulous enemy of the Puritans; Nathaniel



Ward, a sturdy Puritan who was alarmed at the growth of anti-Puritan influences; and Roger Williams, a deeply religious preacher, who rebelled against the control of the Church in New England just as he and others had formerly rebelled in the mother country. (3) Even in the first half-century a good deal of verse was written: sometimes, as in the case of the "Day of Doom," as a mere rimed statement of Puritan theology; but sometimes, as in the case of Anne Bradstreet and her successors, as an expression of real poetic feeling. (4) With the passage to the eighteenth century the community was clearly slipping from the grasp of the Puritans. Evidence is ample from three types of colonists: the Mathers, who were fighting a desperate but losing battle to retain control; Samuel Sewall, who, although a Puritan, was willing to accept reasonable changes; and Mrs. Sarah Kemble Knight, who said little at the time, but in her private journals showed the existence of growing disrespect for the old habits of thought. (5) Benjamin Franklin, whose work is more valuable than that of any of his predecessors, is also representative of the complete swing away from religious enthusiasm to a practical worldliness which was prevailing in England in the eighteenth century. (6) On the other hand, Crèvecoeur, writing just before the Revolution, sounded the note of thanksgiving to the Lord that America was different from the Old World and emphasized what were the conditions of life that were worth fighting to save. (7) Finally, out of all the roster of talented writers during the Revolutionary War, Freneau was the most gifted poet, both as an indirect recorder of the conflict and as an author of poetry on native themes in no way related to the war.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Note the kinds of Revolutionary War literature listed in the opening paragraph. Can you give examples of the same kinds in connection with the World War of 1914-1918?
2. Who were the three leading American poets of the Revolution, and what different kinds of verse did they contribute?

# SECTION II

DATES	AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS	AMERICAN LITERARY HISTORY
1720-1740	BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: <i>Silence Dogood Papers</i> , 1722 NATHANIEL AMES: <i>Astronomical Diary and Almanac</i> , 1726-1774 SAMUEL SEWALL: <i>Diary</i> . Manuscript finished, 1729 <i>Poor Richard's Almanac</i> conducted by Franklin, 1732-1748 FRANKLIN: <i>Essay on Human Vanity (Pennsylvania Gazette)</i> , 1735	<i>New England Courant</i> , first newspaper, a weekly, ran from 1721 to 1726 Increase Mather died, 1723 Sarah Kemble Knight died, 1727 Cotton Mather died, 1728 <i>The Pennsylvania Gazette (Sat. Eve. Post)</i> founded by Franklin, 1729 Samuel Sewall died, 1730 Francis Hopkinson born, 1737 Thomas Paine born in England, 1737
1740-1760	FRANKLIN: <i>The Way to Wealth—Father Abraham's Speech</i> , 1757 THOMAS GODFREY: <i>The Prince of Parthia</i> (first published American tragedy), 1759; acted, 1767	Thomas Jefferson born, 1743 Princeton College founded, 1746 University of Pennsylvania founded by Franklin, 1749 John Trumbull born, 1750 Philip Freneau born, 1752 King's College (now Columbia University) founded, 1754
1760-1770	ROBERT ROGERS: <i>Ponteach</i> (first American tragedy on a native theme). London, 1766 FRANKLIN: <i>Works</i> (one volume, quarto; letters on scientific subjects) London, 1769	College of Rhode Island (now Brown University) founded, 1764 Dartmouth College founded, 1769
1770-1780	FRANKLIN: <i>Autobiography</i> (begun 1771, completed 1780). PHILIP FRENEAU (with H. H. BRACKENRIDGE): <i>The Rising Glory of America</i> , 1772 JOHN TRUMBULL: <i>The Progress of Dulness, Part I</i> , 1772; <i>Parts II and III</i> , 1773 FRANCIS HOPKINSON: <i>A Pretty Story</i> . FRENEAU: <i>Five revolutionary satires</i> , August-December, 1775 TRUMBULL: <i>M'Fingal, Canto I</i> , 1776 THOMAS PAINE: <i>Common Sense</i> , 1776 HOPKINSON: <i>A Prophecy</i> , 1776; <i>The New Roof</i> , 1778; <i>The Battle of the Kegs</i> , 1779	Franklin returned to America after ten years in England as agent of colonies, 1775 Franklin sent to France to procure aid in war against England, 1778
1780-1790	FRENEAU: <i>The British Prison Ship</i> , 1781 CRÉVECEUR: <i>Letters from an American Farmer</i> . London, 1782 TRUMBULL: <i>M'Fingal</i> (in complete form), 1782 FRENEAU: <i>The Political Balance</i> , 1782; <i>The Progress of Balloons</i> , 1784; <i>Poems</i> , 1786 ROYALL TYLER: <i>The Contrast</i> (first American comedy acted by a professional company). Produced, 1787	Washington Irving born, 1783 James Fenimore Cooper born, 1789
1790-1800	PAINE: <i>Rights of Man, Part I</i> , 1791; <i>Part II</i> , 1792 Massachusetts Historical Society: <i>Collections, Vol. I</i> , 1792 WILLIAM DUNLAP; André: (first American historical play presented by professionals), 1798 JOSEPH HOPKINSON: <i>Hail Columbia</i> , Written and sung, 1798	Franklin died, 1790 Francis Hopkinson died, 1791 Massachusetts Historical Society founded, 1791 William Cullen Bryant born, 1794 Washington's Farewell Address, 1796; his death, 1799 A. Bronson Alcott, Transcendentalist, born, 1799

## SECTION II

ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LITERATURE	HISTORICAL EVENTS
<p>Defoe: <i>Moll Flanders</i>, 1722  Swift: <i>Gulliver's Travels</i>, 1726  Goldsmith born, 1728  Gay: <i>The Beggars' Opera</i>, 1728  Pope: <i>Dunciad</i>, 1728  Steele died, 1729  Colley Cibber, poet laureate, 1730-1757</p>	<p>Sir Robert Walpole, first prime minister of England, 1721-1742  France made a Catholic country by decree of 1724  George II, king of England, 1727-1760  Printing-press set up by Franklin in Philadelphia, 1728  First theater built in America, Charleston, 1732  Georgia settled, 1733</p>
<p>Pope died, 1744  Fielding: <i>Tom Jones</i>, 1749  Goethe born, 1749  Gray: <i>Elegy in a Country Churchyard</i>, 1751  Johnson: <i>Dictionary of the English Language</i>, 1755  Burns born, 1759</p>	<p>Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, 1740-1786  The first Bible printed in America in a European language (German), 1743  Ohio Company formed, 1749 [1752]  First regular theatrical company played in the United States, 1755  Expulsion of the Acadians, 1755  Black Hole of Calcutta, 1756 [1756-1763]  Seven Years' War (in America, the French and Indian Wars), 1756-1760  French lost Canada to England, 1759-1760</p>
<p>Goldsmith: <i>Citizen of the World</i> (Letters in <i>Public Ledger</i>, 1760-1761). Reprinted in 1762  Rousseau: <i>The Social Contract</i> (urging popular sovereignty and simple living), 1762  Voltaire wrote a severe attack on the Catholic Church as it then existed, 1764  Goldsmith: <i>Vicar of Wakefield</i>, 1766</p>	<p>George III, king of England, 1760-1820  French gave up all North American possessions to England and Spain at end of Seven Years' War, 1763  Mason and Dixon line established, 1763-1767  Stamp Act (tax on colonists' leases, deeds, etc.), 1765 [1767]  Invention of spinning-jenny by Hargreaves (Englishman), 1765  Arkwright (Englishman) introduced spinning by rollers, 1768 [1769]  Watt (Scotchman) invented modern form of steam engine, 1769  Daniel Boone crossed Alleghenies into Kentucky, 1769  Napoleon Bonaparte born, 1769</p>
<p>Wordsworth born, 1770  Goldsmith: <i>The Deserted Village</i>, 1770  Scott born, 1771  Coleridge born, 1772  Goldsmith: <i>She Stoops to Conquer</i>, 1773  Goldsmith died, 1774  Jane Austen and Charles Lamb born, 1775  Adam Smith: <i>The Wealth of Nations</i> (first great work on the new science of political economy), 1776  Rousseau and Voltaire died, 1778</p>	<p>Boston Massacre, 1770  Boston Tea Party, 1773  First Continental Congress, 1774  England passed Quebec Act on eve of American Revolution, to insure Canada's loyalty, 1774  Burke's speech on "Conciliation," in Parliament, 1775  Battles of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill, 1775  Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776  Burgoyne's surrender, 1777  France acknowledged independence of United States and made a treaty, 1778  <b>THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR, 1775-1783</b></p>
<p>Rousseau: <i>Confessions</i>, 1782  Burns: <i>Poems</i>, 1786  De Quincey born, 1786  Byron born, 1788</p>	<p>Articles of Confederation ratified by all the states, 1781  Cornwallis surrendered, October, 1781  England acknowledged independence of United States, 1782  Treaty of peace signed at Paris, September 3, 1783  Spain gained Floridas from England, 1783  The Constitution ratified by eleven states, 1788  George Washington inaugurated president, March 4, 1789  Estates General in France met the first time since 1614, 1789  Storming of the Bastille, July 14, 1789  North Carolina accepted Constitution, 1789</p>
<p>Goethe: <i>Faust</i>. Begun, 1790; finished, 1831  Shelley born, 1792  Carlyle and Keats born, 1795  Burns died, 1796  Coleridge: <i>Poems</i>, 1796; <i>The Ancient Mariner</i>, 1798  Balzac born, 1799</p>	<p>Population of slave and free states about equal, 1791  Bill of Rights, adding ten amendments to Constitution, 1791  Eli Whitney (American) invented cotton gin, 1792  France proclaimed a republic, 1792  French Revolution: Reign of Terror (1793-1794)  John Adams, president, 1797-1801  Rhode Island, Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee admitted to the Union, between 1790 and 1800</p>

3. How is the many-sided nature of Francis Hopkinson revealed in his interest in the arts, in his daily activities, and in his writings?

4. What were the two kinds of subjects which Trumbull treated in satire in his two best-known poems?

5. Why was it natural that just after the Revolution there should have been many poems and orations on the future of America?

6. "The Progress of Balloons" derives its title from a whole series of preceding "progress" poems. Cite one other and compare it as you can.

7. How did Freneau show that he wanted America to be free from England in literature and education as well as in government?

8. With reference to Freneau's diction in nature passages as compared with that of Ames and Lewis in the text, notice the comparison between the prose of Irving and that of a representative modern writer made on page 120. If these cases are typical, did the attempt to simplify literary prose come earlier or later than a similar attempt with poetry?

9. Of how many authors before 1800 have you now a definite impression as to the kind of work they did and its relative importance? Who of them have made enough of an impression upon you to make you think you will remember them for any length of time?

10. For information on these questions see the Chronological Outlines at the close of this chapter:

*a.* What four writings of Hopkinson are mentioned in the text, and when were they published?

*b.* What great English nature poet was born about this time?

*c.* What other names in the "English Literature" column between 1770 and 1780 are familiar to you?

*d.* Is there any clear parallel between the historical events of 1770 to 1790 and the chief works of American authors as a whole?

*e.* Do the writings of American authors named between 1770 and 1780 suggest that they were eager for a conflict with Britain or anxious to avoid it?

*f.* Connect the dates of three Freneau poems between 1780 and 1790 with literary or historical events on the other side of the water.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TRANSITION TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

No reading list is supplied with this chapter, as no special reading for it could profitably be done in a school course. It is presented as a historical link between the chapters on the literature and should be studied as such.

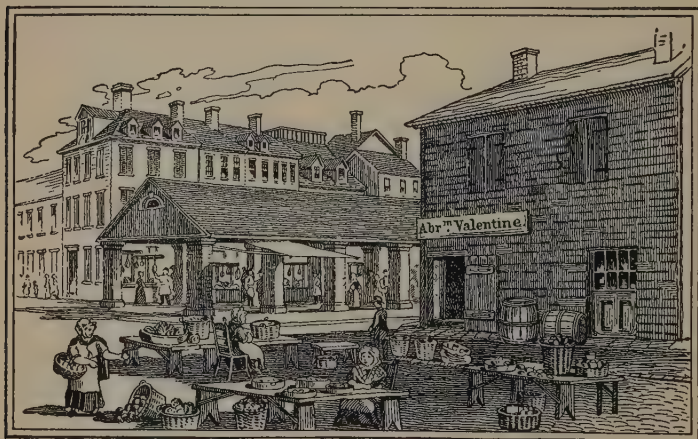
#### CHAPTER OUTLINE

- The turn from colonial to national America
- The rise of New York as a literary center
- The "magnificent isolation" of America
- The lack of national dignity in America
- The self-consciousness of crudities in America
- The new authors not college-educated men

**The turn from colonial to national America.** The turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century is a turn from colonial to national America. Two kinds of writing, which were more and more frequent from the Revolution to the end of the century, only emphasize how respectful the colonial writers were to English models. The plays written in America were few and frankly imitative, and not one of them was a notable stage success even before American audiences. There were, to be sure, many theaters in which remarkably good plays were well acted; but until after 1800 almost all the playwrights, the managers, and even the actors were English. The fiction written in America during the same period was no more original, the one novelist of any wide reputation, Charles Brockden Brown, being an admiring follower of the second-rate English author William Godwin. But a great change was to take place with three men born in the closing years of the century, who were to become great and lasting favorites—Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant.



**The rise of New York as a literary center.** This is not to say that what these men wrote is entirely different from what had been written in the colonial period or in eighteenth-century England. Yet there are many points of clear distinction. While they were growing up, for one thing, New York City was for the first time becoming the literary center of the country. This position was later to be lost, but for the time being the United



FLY MARKET, NEW YORK, IN 1816

States had a dominating city. Usually the intellectual and artistic life of a country centers about its capital. Athens, Rome, Paris, London, are places through which the voices of Greece, Italy, France, and England have spoken. These cities have held their preëminence, moreover, because, in addition to being the seats of government, they have been the great commercial centers and, usually, the great ports of their countries. In the United States, then, the final adoption of Washington in the District of Columbia as the national capital was a compromise step; this could not result in bringing to it the additional distinction which natural conditions gave to New York. Washington has never been more than the city where the

national business of government is carried on; locating the center for art and literature has been beyond the control of lawmakers. For the first third of the nineteenth century New York was the favored city. Here Irving was born, and it was here that Cooper and Bryant came as young men, rather than to the Philadelphia of Franklin, Hopkinson, Freneau, and their contemporaries.

**The "magnificent isolation" of America.** For these men of New York, America was an accomplished fact—a nation slowly and awkwardly taking its place among the nations of the world. To be sure, the place that Americans wanted to take, following the advice of George Washington, was one of withdrawal from the Old World and of safety from "entangling alliances" which could ever again bring it into warfare. The Atlantic was immensely broader in those days than now, for its real breadth is to be measured not in miles but in the number of days that it takes to cross it. When Irving went abroad for the first time, in 1804, he was fifty-nine days in passage. Today one can go round the world in considerably less time, and the average fast Atlantic steamship passage is one tenth of that, while aëroplane flight has divided the time by ten again. But the early Americans rejoiced in their "magnificent isolation" and wanted to grow up as dignified, respected, but very distant neighbors of the Old World.

**The lack of national dignity in America.** It was an unhappy fact, however, that America—or the United States—was not notable for its dignity in the early years of the nineteenth century; for the finest dignity, like charity, "is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked," whereas the new nation was very self-conscious, uncomfortably aware of its own crudeness and imperfections, and quickly irritated at foreign criticism. As far as foreign criticism was concerned, there were ample reasons for annoyance in America. Even as early as 1775 John Trumbull had felt that it was hopeless to expect fair treatment at the hands of English reviewers, warning his friends Dwight and Barlow,

Such men to charm could Homer's muse avail,  
 Who read to cavil, and who write to rail;  
 When ardent genius pours the bold sublime,  
 Carp at the style, or nibble at the rhyme;

and the mother country, after the Revolution and the War of 1812, was less inclined than before to deal in compliment. Man after man came over,

Like Fearon, Ashe, and others we could mention;  
 Who paid us friendly visits to abuse  
 Our country, and find food for the reviews.

Moreover, all the time that England was criticizing her runaway child she was too complacent as to her own virtues. Americans could not strike back with any effect, because they could not make the English feel their blows. So they fretted and fumed for half a century, their discomfort finding its clearest expression in Lowell's lines:

She *is* some punkins, thet I wun't deny  
 (For ain't she some related to you'n I?)  
 But there's a few small intrists here below  
 Outside the counter o' John Bull an' Co,  
 An' though they can't conceit how't should be so,  
 I guess the Lord druv down Creation's spiles  
 'Thout no *gret* helpin' from the British Isles,  
 An' could contrive to keep things pooty stiff  
 Ef they withdrawn from business in a miff;  
 I han't no patience with sech swellin' fellers ez  
 Think God can't forge 'thout them to blow the bellerses.

**The self-consciousness of crudities in America.** A further reason for uneasiness at foreign comment was that honest Americans knew their country was youthful and crude. It is unpleasant enough for "Seventeen" to be nagged by an unsympathetic maiden aunt, but it is doubly hard if there is some ground for her nagging. In small matters as well as in great "conscience doth make cowards of us all." In a period of such

rapid expansion as prevailed during the young manhood of Irving, Cooper, and Bryant it was unavoidable that many people were drawn into business projects that were usually eager and hurried and that were often slipshod or even shady. The American colleges and their graduates were not as distinguished as they had been in the earlier colonial days, and the new influence of European culture from the Old World universities was yet to come. In the cities, and notably in New York, the newly-rich multiplied rapidly, bringing up vapid daughters like Halleck's "Fanny," who in all the modern languages was



OLD NORTH CHURCH, BOSTON  
(PAUL REVERE'S)

Exceedingly well-versed ; and had devoted  
To their attainment, far more time than has,  
By the best teachers, lately been allotted ;  
For she had taken lessons, twice a week,  
For a full month in each ; and she could speak

French and Italian, equally as well  
As Chinese, Portuguese, or German ; and,  
What is still more surprising, she could spell  
Most of our longest English words off-hand ;  
Was quite familiar in Low Dutch and Spanish,  
And thought of studying modern Greek and Danish ;

and whose father was established in a mortgaged house filled with servants and "whatever is necessary for a 'genteel liver.'"

At the same time the countryside was developing a native but not altogether admirable Yankee type. At their best, Halleck wrote,

The people of today  
Appear good, honest, quiet men enough  
And hospitable too—for ready pay;  
With manners like their roads, a little rough,  
And hands whose grasp is warm and welcoming, though tough.

And at their worst, Whittier looks back a half century, to 1818, and recalls them as

Shrill, querulous women, sour and sullen men,  
Untidy, loveless, old before their time,  
With scarce a human interest save their own  
Monotonous round of small economies,  
Or the poor scandal of the neighborhood;

. . . . .

Church-goers, fearful of the unseen Powers,  
But grumbling over pulpit tax and pew-rent,  
Saving, as shrewd economists, their souls  
And winter pork, with the least possible outlay  
Of salt and sanctity; in daily life  
Showing as little actual comprehension  
Of Christian charity and love and duty  
As if the Sermon on the Mount had been  
Outdated like a last year's almanac.

**The new authors not college-educated men.** Finally, it is worth noting that the first three eminent writers in nineteenth-century America were not college graduates. Bryant withdrew from Williams College at the end of the first year, and Cooper from Yale toward the end of the second. The real education of these two and of Irving, who did not even enter college, was in the world of action rather than in the world of books, and their associates were for the most part men of affairs.



# SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What two kinds of narrative literature after the Revolution were still almost wholly subject to English models?
2. What is the usual relation of art to the political capital of a country?
3. What is the case in America?
4. What material changes have taken place in the last hundred years with respect to America's "magnificent isolation"? What political changes within the last generation?
5. What reasons had Americans to be disturbed by foreign criticism in the early nineteenth century?
6. What were some of the criticisms on American life and manners written by Americans?
7. The following questions may be answered from the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters IV and VII:
  - a. Name as many forms of American literature written up to 1800 as you can, and give an example of each.
  - b. What are the four American plays mentioned in the last half of the eighteenth century, and what is the title of each to distinction in the history of American literature?
  - c. What well-known patriotic song was written and sung before 1800?

## CHAPTER IX

### WASHINGTON IRVING (1783-1859)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

WASHINGTON IRVING. *The Salmagundi Papers* (1807-1808), Nos. 1 and 11; *The Sketch Book* (1819) (see *Standard English Classics* reprint, Ginn and Company): "English Writers on America," "Rural Life in England," "Little Britain," and "Rip Van Winkle."

Other passages found in the following collections:

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 99-129. Ginn and Company.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 186-225. Ginn and Company.

FOERSTER, NORMAN. *The Chief American Prose Writers*, pp. 38-94. Houghton Mifflin Company.

See Oliver Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village," for influence on Irving's writing.

What American traits were satirized in No. 11 of the "Salmagundi Papers"?

What were Anglo-American relations in Irving's time? In what essay does he discuss them? What is his own attitude?

What influence of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" do you find in Irving's "Rural Life"?

From a reading of "Little Britain" should you say that Irving had a feeling of respect for old English customs and traditions or only a feeling of amusement at them?

Read "Rip Van Winkle" with special attention to Irving's use of homely details belonging to the time and place.

Read "Rip Van Winkle" with special attention to the story structure. What are the two passages of time into which most of it is brought?

Try to discover for yourself the features of Irving's sentence structure and choice of words that are not common in twentieth-century essays, and then compare your observations with those in this chapter.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- The life of Washington Irving
  - Boyhood and first trip abroad
  - First period of authorship, 1807-1809
  - Second period of authorship, 1819-1831
  - Third period of authorship and diplomatic service
- "The Sketch Book"
  - How it was written, published, and received
  - Contents of "The Sketch Book"
    - General classification by types
    - "English Writers on America"
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      - The English government
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      - "Rip Van Winkle"
      - "Sleepy Hollow" and "The Spectre Bridegroom"
- Irving's prose style
- Last years and the Knickerbocker School

**The life of Washington Irving.** Many of the facts about the boyhood and youth of Washington Irving are typical of his place and his period as well as true of himself. The first is that he was born in New York City of British-American parents, his father a Scotch Presbyterian from the Orkney Islands and his mother an Englishwoman. His father's rigid religious views ruled in the upbringing of young Irving and his six brothers and sisters. Two very natural results followed: one, that as a boy he grew to regard almost everything that was enjoyable as wicked; and the other, that as he came toward manhood he was particularly fond of the pleasures of life. A boy of his position in Boston at this time would have been more than likely to go to Harvard College, which was a controlling influence in eastern Massachusetts, but King's College (Colum-

bia) held no such place in New York. Irving's higher education began in a law office, and then, when his health seemed to be failing, was continued by travel abroad.

**Boyhood and first trip abroad.** The long journey, or series of journeys, that he took from 1804 to 1806 were of the greatest importance. They were important to Irving because he was peculiarly fitted to get the greatest good from such informal education. He was an attractive young fellow, so that it was easy for him to make and to hold friends; and he was blessed with his father's moral balance, so that he did not fall into bad habits. He was so far inclined to laziness that it is doubtful if he would have achieved much if he had gone to college, but he was wide-awake and receptive, so that he absorbed information wherever he went. Furthermore, he had a mind as well as a memory, and he came back to America stocked not merely with a great lot of miscellaneous facts but with a real knowledge of human nature and of human life.

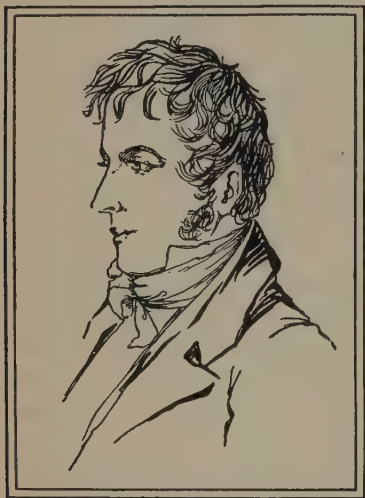
**First period of authorship, 1807-1809.** From the day of his return to New York in 1806 to the day of his death, in 1859, Washington Irving had an international point of view and developed steadily into an international character. His first piece of writing was that of a very young man, but a young man of promise. Like the other Americans of his day he had read a good deal of English literature written in the eighteenth century; and among the essayists of that century whom he liked one was Oliver Goldsmith. New York supplied him with his subjects and Goldsmith with his way of writing, for he wrote, in company with one of his brothers and a mutual friend, a series of amusing criticisms on the ways of his townsmen, modeling his "Salmagundi Papers" after Goldsmith's "Citizen of the World." This was at once independent and imitative. The youthful authors blithely announced in their first number that they proposed to "instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age." In the twenty-two papers that came out at odd times between January, 1807, and January, 1808, they criticized everything that struck their attention, and

they had their eyes wide open. The American love of display, the tendency toward useless talk which made the country a "logocracy" (or word-ocracy) rather than a democracy, the lack of both judgment and good behavior at election times, and their social and literary fashions make just a beginning of the list of subjects held up to genial ridicule. Yet, though the criticism was fair and to the point, it was an old-fashioned kind of comment, the kind that England had been feeding on for the better part of a century, ever since Addison and Steele had made it popular in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. Moreover, it was done in an old-fashioned way, for in making Mustapha Rub-a-Dub Keli Khan, the Tripolitan, the foreign critic on American life as he saw it with a stranger's eyes they were using a device that was old even before it was employed by the Englishman from whom they borrowed it. The "Salmagundis" are interesting, however, as early representatives of a longish succession of satires on the life of New York, all pleasant and rather pleasantly superficial. Two years later Irving, this time alone, followed up this opening success with his "Knickerbocker's History of New York," not as serious a piece of work as its title at first suggests, for it was a take-off of a ponderous history on the same subject which had appeared just before. Like the "Salmagundis" it was lively and impertinent, the very clever work of a very young man.

**Second period of authorship, 1819-1831.** Now for ten years Washington Irving wrote nothing. He was in business with his brothers and proved himself the most level-headed member of a pretty unbusinesslike combination. In 1815, in connection with one of their many ambitious failures, he went abroad, probably without the least suspicion that he would be absent from his own country for seventeen years and that he would return to it as a celebrated writer widely read on two continents. The first step toward his wider reputation came in 1819 with the publication in London of "The Sketch Book," the best known of all his works. This was followed in 1822 by "Bracebridge Hall" and in 1824 by "Tales of a Traveller," both



similar in tone and contents to the "Sketch Book." With a reputation as a graceful writer of sketches and stories now well established, he turned to a more substantial and ambitious form of work in the composition of "The History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus," living and writing in



WASHINGTON IRVING

An early portrait

Madrid for the two years before its publication in 1828; and this book he followed quickly, as in the case of the "Sketch Book," with two other productions of the same kind—"The Conquest of Granada," in 1829, and "The Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus," in 1831. For three years before his return to America Irving served as Secretary of Legation to the Court of St. James, London, and then came back to enjoy at home a popularity which had been almost wholly earned abroad.

**Third period of authorship, and diplomatic service.** Out

of his career thus far four main facts deserve attention. First, that his literary work began with two pieces of social satire written in a boyish, jovial manner which he outgrew in later years; second, that his fame was established on works of the "Sketch Book" type, made up of short units, gracefully written and full of quiet humor and tender sentiment (now and again he continued in this sort of composition up to the end of his life); third, that in his maturer years he turned to the writing of formal history, and that he followed the first three studies done in Spain with "Oliver Goldsmith" in 1849, "Mahomet and his Successors" in 1850, and "The Life of Washington," com-

pleted in 1859, the year of his death. To these literary facts should be added a fourth, which is both literary and political and of no small significance in history—the fact of Irving's appointment to a post in the foreign diplomatic service. This post in London was to be followed in his own life by his four years as minister to Spain in 1842–1846; in the next fifty years a distinguished list of other men of letters were appointed to the consular and diplomatic staffs. No single group has done more to bring honor to the United States in the courts of Europe during the last hundred years than writers like Irving, Hawthorne, Motley, Howells, Bayard Taylor, Lowell, Hay, and their successors down to Thomas Nelson Page and Brand Whitlock.

**"The Sketch Book"**—how it was written, published, and received. To return to the "Sketch Book." By 1818, three years after Irving had gone abroad for the second time, the business in which he had been engaged with his brothers had utterly failed, and he was forced to regard writing not merely as an amusement but as a way to earn a living. The new articles which he then wrote, together with many which had been accumulating in the leisure of his years in England, were soon ready for publication, but they found no English publisher ready to risk putting them out. Even the powerful influence of Sir Walter Scott, Irving's cordial friend, could not prevail at first with John Murray, "the prince of publishers." In 1819 Sydney Smith's contemptuous and famous query "Who reads an American book?" fairly represented the English opinion of American authors. Murray was interested in Irving's manuscript, but did not see any prospect of selling enough books to justify the risk of publication. Irving had wanted the distinction of being published by Murray to offset the usual severity of English criticism (see page 100). As soon, however, as the sketches were printed in New York, in a set of seven modest installments, the attention of English readers was attracted to them, and Irving heard rumors that a "pirated" English edition was to appear. There was no international

copyright in those days, and no adequate one until as late as 1899; so that a book printed on one side of the Atlantic was fair game for anyone who chose to steal it on the other. If an author wanted his works to appear correctly and to get his full money return for them, it was necessary for him to go through all the details of publishing independently in both countries.



SUNNYSIDE—HOME OF WASHINGTON IRVING

After a great deal of trouble, therefore, Irving managed to get out an English edition through an inefficient publisher; but the success of it was so marked that Murray soon saw his mistake in not taking Scott's advice, and from then on was eager to get the English rights for everything that Irving wrote and to pay him in advance five, ten, and, in one case, as much as fifteen thousand dollars.

With the appearance of the "Sketch Book" England arrived at a new answer for Sydney Smith's question. Irving was sought as a celebrity by the many, in addition to being loved as a charming gentleman by his older friends. Few tributes are

more telling than that contained in a letter written many years later by Charles Dickens in which he refers to the delight he took in Irving's pages when he was "a small and not over particularly well taken care of boy." Even the austere *Edinburgh Review* indorsed the American as a writer of "great purity and beauty of diction." From the most feared critic in the English-speaking world to the neglected boy whose father was in debtors' prison Irving received enough applause quite to turn the head of a less modest man.

**Contents of the "Sketch Book"**—classification by types. "The Sketch Book" includes over thirty papers of four or five different kinds. About half are definite observations on English life and habits as seen in country towns and on country estates. Of the rest six are literary essays of various kinds; four are personal travel reminiscences; three are the famous short stories—"Rip Van Winkle," "Sleepy Hollow," and "The Spectre Bridegroom"; and five can be classified only as miscellaneous.

**"English Writers on America."** As a matter of literary history the sixth paper deserves far more notice than is usually given to it—for as a rule it is totally neglected. This is entitled "English Writers on America." The tone of English literary criticism has already been referred to. In this essay Irving stated that all English writings on America and the Americans were equally ill-natured. He pointed out that ordinarily English readers demanded strictest accuracy from author travelers; that if a man who wrote a book on the regions of the Upper Nile or the unknown islands of the Yellow Sea was caught in error at a few minor points he was held up to scorn as careless and unreliable, and another English traveler who could convict him of mistakes or misstatements could completely discredit him. But, in marked contrast to this, no such scrupulousness was demanded of visitors to the United States. Books on America were written to please a public which disliked the new nation in the western world. Irving gave warning against keeping up this practice, not merely because it was uncharitable but because in time it would estrange the two peoples and lose for



England a friend with whom she could not afford to be at loggerheads. If there is any justification for calling an American essay "The American Declaration of Literary Independence," the title should be conferred on this neglected number in the "Sketch Book." It was long before either English or American writers were wise enough to follow Irving's counsels, but he himself was always as tactful as he was honest.

**Papers on English life and custom.** "The Sketch Book" as a whole, then, can best be understood as an American's comments on English life and custom, made at a time when "the retort of abuse and sarcasm" would have been quite natural. In the opening paper, as well as in the sixth, there is a gentle reminder that the literary east wind had felt rather sharp and nipping in New York. Irving is describing himself after the fashion of the eighteenth-century essayists at the introduction of a series, and at the end indulges in this little nudge of irony:

A great man of Europe, thought I, must . . . be as superior to a great man of America, as a peak of the Alps to a highland of the Hudson; and in this idea I was confirmed by observing the comparative importance and swelling magnitude of many English travelers among us, who, I was assured, were very little people in their own country. I will visit this land of wonders, thought I, and see the gigantic race from which I am degenerated.

**The English government.** His impressions of the typical Englishman are summarized in the thirtieth paper, on "John Bull." This keen analysis will bear the closest study, and the more one knows of English history the more interesting it becomes. In this respect it is like "Gulliver's Travels," for it is full of double meanings. To the inattentive or the immature it is simply a picture of a bluff, hearty, quick-tempered, overconservative, average English country gentleman, but to the intelligent and attentive reader this gentleman turns out to be the embodiment of the English government and the British Empire. The character of Parliament, the relation between Church and State, the condition of the national treasury, the attitude of the



rulers toward reform laws and toward the colonies, dependencies, and dominions are all treated with kindly humor by the visiting critic. The picture is by no means a flattering one, but it was Irving's happy gift to be able to write a really biting satire in such a courteous and friendly way that his words carried little sting. Part of the last paragraph to this essay will illustrate his method of combining justice with mercy:

Though there may be something rather whimsical in all this, yet I confess I cannot look upon John's situation without strong feelings of interest. With all his odd humors and obstinate prejudices, he is a sterling-hearted old blade. He may not be so wonderfully fine a fellow as he thinks himself, but he is at least twice as good as his neighbors represent him. His virtues are all his own; all plain, homebred and unaffected. His very faults smack of the raciness of his good qualities. His extravagance savors of his generosity; his quarrelsomeness, of his courage; his credulity, of his open faith; his vanity, of his pride; and his bluntness, of his sincerity. They are all the redundancies of a rich and liberal character.

**Country life.** In this spirit Irving wrote the other sketches of John Bull as he appears in "Rural Life," "The Country Church," "The Inn Kitchen," and the group of five Christmas pictures. To judge from these eight scenes of English country life, Irving, a visitor from a new and unsettled land, was fascinated by the evidences of age and tradition. For this reason, if for no other, he delighted in the customs of the country squires who had not been swept out of their ways of life by the tide of modern trade. Even the English scenery was in his mind "associated with ideas of order, of quiet, of sober, well-established principles, of hoary usage and reverend custom. Everything seems to be the growth of ages of regular and peaceful existence." As Irving observed it, it was still the "Merrie England" of song and story, an England, therefore, beautifully typified in the celebration of the Christmas festivities. There is a touch of autobiography in his comment on the good cheer that prevailed at Bracebridge Hall,—a home

that Squire Bracebridge tried to make his children feel was the happiest place in the world,—it was so utterly different from the suppressed family circle over which his Presbyterian father had ruled. As a guest he enjoyed all the picturesque and quaint merrymaking at the Hall. Yet all the while he was aware that the old English gentleman was a costly luxury for England to maintain, that Squire Bracebridge was after all nothing but John Bull, and that John Bull was inclining to lag behind his age. As a student of Goldsmith, Irving had read "The Deserted Village"; the thought of it seems to have come back to him while writing "Rural Life"; for a moment the selfish control of the land by the wealthy disturbed him, but then he consoled himself with the comforting thought that abuses of this sort were "but casual outbreaks in the general system." Irving was writing as an observer who found much to admire in the external beauty of the old fashions, but at the bottom of his American mind it is quite clear that he believed in gradually changing them. Squire Bracebridge was delightful to Irving, but on the whole he was a delightful old fogey.

**Scenes in London.** Irving's papers on London "The Boar's Head Tavern," "Westminster Abbey," and "Little Britain" are full of a similar reverence for old age in the life of the community. In the same mood in which he laughed at the pranks of the Christmas Lord of Misrule he made his way to Eastcheap, "that ancient region of wit and wassail, where the very names of the streets relished of good cheer, as Pudding Lane bears testimony even at the present day"; and he felt much more evident satisfaction in his recollection of Shakespearean revelries than in his hours in Westminster, the "mingled picture of glory and decay." Once again in "Little Britain" Irving was in more congenial surroundings, for he preferred to smile at the echoes of dead laughter rather than to shudder at the reminders of vanished greatness.

Little Britain may truly be called the heart's-core of the city; the strong-hold of true John Bullism. It is a fragment of London as it was in its better days, with its antiquated folks and fashions:

Here flourish in great preservation many of the holiday games and customs of yore. The inhabitants most religiously eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, hot-cross-buns on Good Friday, and roast goose at Michaelmas; they send love-letters on Valentine's Day, burn the Pope on the fifth of November, and kiss all the girls under the mistletoe at Christmas. Roast beef and plum-pudding are also held in superstitious veneration, and port and sherry maintain their grounds as the only true English wines.

**English good cheer.** In more than casual respect for such traditions Irving goes on to introduce the rival leaders of Little Britain, to escort us to Wagstaff's and the Roaring Lads, to act as personal conductor to Bartholomew Fairs and a Lord Mayor's Day, and, finally, to lament the sad influence of the socially ambitious Misses Lamb and the decline of the choice old games All-Fours, Pope Joan, and Tom-come-tickle-me. It is no wonder that the youthful Dickens loved these papers, for the same England appealed to both Irving and Dickens throughout their lives. It was a rough, boisterous, jolly England, with a good deal of vulgarity which they were ready to forgive and a good many vices which they chose to overlook in favor of its chief virtues—a blunt honesty, a hearty laugh, and a full stomach.

**English sentimentalism.** There is another side of old England that was dear to those two—that John Bull could "easily be moved to a sudden tear" (see page 149). In the "good old days" of even a hundred years ago men of Saxon stock were much more ready to express themselves than they are today, for the accepted manners of the present are comparatively reserved and undemonstrative. If a man was amused he laughed loud and long; if he was angered he came up with "a word and a blow"; and if his deeper feelings were touched he was not ashamed of a tear. In fact he seemed almost to feel a certain pride in his "sensibility," as if his power to weep proved that his nature was not lost to finer feeling and made up for his quickness to wrath and his fondness for a broad joke. In perhaps unconscious recognition of this habit of mind the litera-

ture of a century ago contained a great many frank appeals to the reader's feeling for pathos, appeals which the modern reader would be likely to condemn as unworthily sentimental.

In the history of literature a distinction is made between "sentiment" (the power to respond to the finer emotions such

as love, sorrow, reverence, patriotism, worship) and "sentimentalism" (the unrestricted expression of these emotions by eloquence, tears, and feminine sighs, blushes, and swoonings). For this sentimentalism, which was a literary fashion of his period, Irving found an outlet in sketches like "The Wife," "The Broken Heart," "The Widow and her Son," and "The Pride of the Village."



JEFFERSON AS RIP VAN WINKLE

Literary essays. Two other types of work remain to be mentioned. The first is the literary essay, in which the chief interest arises from Irving's admiring comments on his English masters. From these essays—there are five of distinct im-

portance—it appears that he was especially well-read in the writings of a much earlier period and that he enjoyed the writers who were characterized, as his own work came to be, by "great purity and beauty of diction."

"Rip Van Winkle." The other group is the most famous in the "Sketch Book," the three stories, of which "Rip Van Winkle" is the best-known. This is extremely interesting for several reasons. The first is that it is a good story which will long be read for its own sake, and as such it needs no comment, for it is familiar to everyone. But it is also a milestone in

literary history. One reason for this is that it carries into practice a principle that American authors had long been talking and writing about—the principle of using native material. It is located in the Catskill Mountains and in the years before and after the Revolutionary War. It introduces real colonial and early American people. Although it is a far-fetched romance in its theme, it makes use of homely, realistic details. Jonathan Doolittle's hotel was just the sort of shabby boarding-house that marred the countryside during the slipshod years after the Revolution and that survived into Irving's youth. "A large, rickety, wooden building . . . with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats." The sign was strangely changed from pre-Revolution days. "The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON." The fact that the folk story about Hendrick Hudson and his crew had some basis in a German superstition does not affect the fact that Irving completely localized it and gave it its enduring fame as an American tale.

Another reason why this story stands out in literary history is that it is one of the first really successful examples of the modern short story<sup>1</sup> and that in this sense it represents America's chief contribution to the types of literature. We are likely to take for granted that all the popular forms of literature have existed since the beginning of time. Yet prose stories of any kind were comparatively modern a hundred years ago, and

<sup>1</sup>A short story is a story of a few thousand words—seldom more than ten—which is limited to a short period of time, centers around a small group of characters, and is confined to the occurrence or the effect of not more than two or three main events; for example, "Rip Van Winkle."

An essay is a composition in which the main purpose is to explain; for example, "English Writers on America."

A sketch is made up largely of narration and description, and has the length of a short story but lacks its firmness and unity of structure; for example, "Little Britain."



most of them were long narratives in two or three and sometimes as many as six or seven volumes. What short stories existed were merely condensed novels, not limited to any brief period and not developed with any definite detail. "Rip Van Winkle" was strikingly different from its vague and shapeless forerunners. After the introduction it was limited to two short passages of time. And the whole story was composed to lead up to the main point,—the chief point of this history and of all history,—the relentless way in which life moves on, regardless of the individual who falls asleep and is left behind. All the details in the story help to develop this idea. Rip, the ne'er-do-well, was the sort of man to serve as the central character, for he was more anxious to escape life than to take his part in it. His quarrelsome, sharp-tongued wife reminded him of the burden of living only to make him avoid it the more; her loss was the only one which he did not regret on his return. His dog and gun, which he missed first and missed most keenly, were the pride of the old-fashioned trapper out of place in the up-to-date American village. The years bridging the Revolution were the most natural and effective ones to mark the kind of change that is always taking place; and Rip's experience in finding that loyalty to the old government was treason to the new was simply an emphatic illustration of what will usually happen to a man who lives in the past instead of in the present. It is not at all necessary to assume that Irving chose the old folk legend in order to expound this theme, or even that he was conscious of the completeness with which he was doing it. The fact remains that it was remarkable in its day for its clear compactness, and that it meets one of the tests of enduring fiction in telling a good story well and in building that story out of elements that convey some truth about life.

"Sleepy Hollow" and the "Spectre Bridegroom." "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is comparable to "Rip Van Winkle" only in its use of native American character, scenes, and tradition. It is hardly a short story at all, but rather a prolonged sketch full of "local atmosphere" and partly strung on a narra-

tive thread. Ichabod Crane and his townsmen, except for Brom Bones and his gang, are like Rip in one respect, for they are representative citizens in a town where "population, manners and customs [remain] fixed; while the great torrent of migration and improvement, which [was] making such incessant changes in other parts of this restless country, [swept] by them unobserved."

Ichabod was an interesting survival too, because his combination of learning and superstition had come to him from a distinguished source, for he "was a perfect master of Cotton Mather's history of New England witchcraft, in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed. He was, in fact, an odd mixture of small shrewdness and simple credulity. His appetite for the marvelous, and his powers of digesting it, were equally extraordinary, and both had been increased by his residence in this spellbound region. No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow. It was often his delight, after his school was dismissed in the afternoon, to stretch himself on the rich bed of clover bordering the little brook that whimpered by his schoolhouse, and there con over old Mather's direful tales, until the gathering dusk of the evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes." Ichabod, moreover, is a comic type in American life in the early nineteenth century, who seems to have been equally disliked by all New Yorkers—the Puritan descendant strayed from home. Cooper's David Gamut is one of the same crop. The story of the Headless Horseman, like that of the Spectre Bridegroom, is, of course, only a make-believe ghost story, neither important nor well told. The real interest in the sketch lies in its picture of simple country life. The whole scene at Baltus Van Tassel's house is as clear and vivid as the contrasting scenes at Bracebridge Hall or as Whittier's picture of another family scene in "Snow-bound." The third well-known story in the "Sketch Book"—the "Spectre Bridegroom"—is, like the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," more of a sketch than a story, and does not pretend to be laid on American soil.

**Irving's prose style.** It is a common experience of schoolboys and schoolgirls to feel on reading Irving for the first time that his way of writing is formal and courtly. Compared with the fashion of today the wording and sentence structure of the "Sketch Book" deserve such a verdict. But to pass judgment on the writing of a hundred years ago without comparing the book in question with others of its own generation is to ignore the very point of "Rip Van Winkle"—that styles change. Assuming, then, that styles do change and that Irving was no more formal than other authors of his day, it is still worth while to see what some of the main points of contrast are between 1819 and 1919. Here are two passages that will serve as a basis for comparison. The first is from "Philip of Pokanoket," one of the two "Sketch Book" essays written in America.

It is to be regretted that those early writers, who treated of the discovery and settlement of America, have not given us more particular and candid accounts of the remarkable characters that flourished in savage life. The scanty anecdotes that have reached us are full of peculiarity and interest; they furnish us with nearer glimpses of human nature, and show what man is in a comparatively primitive state, and what he owes to civilization. There is something of the charm of discovery in lighting upon these wild and unexplored tracts of human nature; in witnessing, as it were, the native growth of moral sentiment, and perceiving those generous and romantic qualities which have been artificially cultivated by society vegetating in spontaneous hardihood and rude magnificence.

The second is from Gerald Stanley Lee's "Crowds," Bk. I, chap. viii:

The future in America cannot be pictured. The only place it can be seen is in people's faces. Go out into the street, in New York, in Chicago, in San Francisco, in Seattle; look eagerly as you go into the faces of the men who pass, and you feel hundreds of years—the next hundred years—like a breath swept past. America, with all its forty-story buildings, its little play Niagaras, its great dumb Rockies, is the unseen country. It can only as yet be

seen in people's eyes. Some days, flowing sublime and silent through our noisy streets, and through the vast panorama of our towers, I have heard the footfalls of the unborn, like sunshine around me.

These passages have almost exactly the same number of words,—the former one hundred and fifteen and the latter one hundred and seventeen,—but a glance at the printed page shows that Irving's words take up one fifth more space than Lee's do. The reason is that Irving uses twenty-six words of more than two syllables, and Lee, aside from place names, only two. Although both passages are written in analysis of American conditions, Irving, who is discussing the past, employs abstract or general words—to use the nouns alone, words like *discovery*, *anecdotes*, *peculiarity*, *civilization*, *sentiment*, *qualities*, *magnificence*; Lee, who is looking to the future, uses definite and picturesque terms like *faces*, *street*, *buildings*, *eyes*, *panorama*, *towers*, *footfalls*—uses these words even though he admits that the idea he is dealing with cannot be pictured. Again, Irving cast his one hundred and fifteen words into three sentences averaging nearly forty words in length, and Lee put his into six, averaging a fraction less than twenty. Finally, all Irving's sentences are loose, or so built that the reader may rest or even stop with a completed sense before he comes to the end; but four out of six in Lee's passage are periodic, or so constructed that you must read to the end or be left hanging in mid-air.

It would, of course, be forcing the issue too far to insist or even suggest that so broad a comparison would apply to all the writers of a hundred years ago and of today, but in general there is a fair deduction to be drawn. Irving belonged to a group who were still addressing an eighteenth-century audience, an audience made up of "gentle readers,"—men who enjoyed the rhythmical flow of a courtly and elegant style, who felt that there was a virtue in purity and beauty of diction apart from any idea the diction was supposed to express,—but the modern reader esteems literature as a means rather than an end. It must catch and hold his attention; it must be clear and

forcible first, and elegant as a secondary matter; and its words and sentences must be chosen and put together as a challenge to a reader in the midst of a restless, driving, twentieth-century world. There are too few writers today who care for beauty as well as vividness of style. With these facts in mind one may say, if he will, that Washington Irving was formal,

but he should say this as marking a difference and not a necessary inferiority in Irving.

**Last years and the Knickerbocker School.** Irving lived until 1859, but the richly fruitful part of his life was from 1819 to 1832, the year of his return from abroad. In this period he published ten books and all the best known of his works but the lives of Goldsmith and Washington. When he came back after seventeen years' absence, he was known and admired in England, France, and Germany, and was the most popular of American authors. Irving was one of the first to profit, American



WASHINGTON IRVING

A later portrait

by a European reputation reflected and redoubled at home. At the dinner of welcome tendered him soon after his arrival he showed how absence had made the heart grow fonder:

I come from gloomier climes to one of brilliant sunshine and inspiring purity. I come from countries lowering with doubt and danger, where the rich man trembles and the poor man frowns—where all repine at the present and dread the future. I come from these to a country where all is life and animation; where I hear on every side the sound of exultation; where everyone speaks of the past with triumph, the present with delight, the future with growing and confident anticipation.



And here, he went on to say, he proposed to remain as long as he lived. These last twenty-seven years were filled with honors. He had already received the gold medal from the Royal Society of Literature and the degree of Doctor of Laws from Oxford University. Now he was to have the refusal of a whole succession of public offices and the leadership of a whole school of writers. Diedrich Knickerbocker had become a household word which was applied to the Knickerbocker School of Irving's followers and used in the christening of the *Knickerbocker Magazine* (1833-1865). Irving was in truth a connecting link between the century of his birth and the century of his achievements. He carried over the spirit and the manners of Addison and Goldsmith into the New World and into the age of steam. With him it was a natural mode of thought and way of expression, but with his imitators it was affected and superficial—so much so that the Knickerbocker School declined and the *Knickerbocker Magazine* went out of existence shortly after Irving's death.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What significant difference was there between the atmosphere of New York and that of Boston in 1783 as regards the preparation of a youth for his life work?
2. How and why did Irving benefit from travel?
3. What is an international point of view? Compare Irving, Crève-cœur, and Franklin in this respect. Can you name distinguished characters who possess this point of view to a marked degree today?
4. Had Oliver Goldsmith an international point of view? Where is it revealed? What do the table of contents of the "Citizen of the World," portions of "The Traveller," and "The Deserted Village" tell you on this question?
5. What was the "Knickerbocker's History of New York"?
6. Following the writing of "Knickerbocker's History," how was Irving's time occupied?
7. What changes from his earlier manner took place in the second period of literary productivity and its output?

8. Tell briefly of the later years of Irving's life, their political and literary activity.

9. What were the circumstances attending publication of the "Sketch Book"?

10. Classify the different types of essay, sketch, and story in the "Sketch Book" according to the groupings mentioned on page 111.

11. Read the introductory chapter in Wells's "Future in America" or in Bennett's "Your United States," and compare the tone of their comments with that of English writers in Irving's day.

12. What is the literary significance of "Rip Van Winkle"?

13. What may be said of Irving's literary style?

14. Compare and contrast some other excerpt from the "Sketch Book" with that quoted from "Crowds."

15. Select a brief passage from Irving and another from some accepted writer of today, and compare them as the passages from Irving and Lee are compared in the text.

16. How is Irving's influence shown in the reading-public he secured, the honors he earned, and the school of writers who followed him?

17. For assistance in answering the following questions see the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapter XII, and Chronological Chart No. II, p. 381:

a. When did the "Salmagundi Papers" appear? When did the "Citizen of the World" appear? How long was the interval?

b. What authors on the other side of the water were writing at this time? Which one of these tried to assist Irving in connection with a certain publication of his? What publication was it?

c. How many other authors mentioned in the Outlines or Charts began writing after the Revolution before Irving began? After what war was the "Sketch Book" published?

d. Between what years was his most fruitful period of authorship? Make a list of his publications in book form during these years, and characterize each.

e. Substantiate as far as you can from the Outlines the next to the last sentence in the text, that the period of Irving's life was the "age of steam."

f. How are his birth and death dates related to the Revolution and the Civil War?

g. In the decade in which Irving's productive period ends, what new names appear in the list of English writers?

## CHAPTER X

### JAMES FENIMORE COOPER (1789-1851)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

Since "The Last of the Mohicans" is discussed at length in this chapter, it may be more interesting to read one of the other Leatherstocking Tales, preferably "The Deerslayer" (an inexpensive edition, abridged, is published by Ginn and Company) or "The Pathfinder" (published in Everyman's Library edition). See also the passages in Boynton's "Milestones in American Literature," Ginn and Company. The questions that follow apply equally to any of the three, and different members of the class may profitably read different novels.

A novel taken up by a school or college student should be read as the author intended it to be read, at a reasonable speed, for the pleasure to be found in it. If necessary, it should be looked over again after the first whole impression is gained. It will help toward a clear understanding of Cooper, however, if the reader will think of the following points in advance and have them in the back of his mind as he reads:

What is the plot in briefest terms? (For example, "Ivanhoe" is the story of a returned crusader, who comes back to England in disguise, distinguishes himself in tournaments, rescues a beautiful Jewess from death, foils his bitterest enemies, wins his bride, and assists Richard of the Lion Heart to overcome the conspiracy against him.)

What episodes can you cite as presenting the savage side of the Indians in any one of Cooper's novels? What passages seem to you to idealize them?

Does the character of the native American hero in the one of Cooper's novels you have read seem natural or self-contradictory? Have you ever known anyone like him?

Answer the same questions with reference to one or more of the women in one of his novels.

About how much time passes between beginning and end of a specified novel of Cooper? How much of this does he skip in connecting passages, and how much does he narrate in detail? Does he give more attention to action or to what was going on in the characters' minds?

Do you find in one of Cooper's novels many instances of rather mechanical handling of the plot by means of the "broken twig" or the unexpected shot, as discussed on page 136?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Cooper's life to the beginning of authorship
- First novels: "Precaution" and "The Spy"
- The Leatherstocking series as a whole
- "The Last of the Mohicans"
- The key to the story
- The characters
- The Indians
- The other male characters
- The "females"
- The adventure material of the stories
- The construction of the stories
- Cooper as a critic and as a defender of America
- The effect of his residence abroad
- The consequent novels
- The truth and the harshness of his criticisms
- Last years and conclusion

**Cooper's life to the beginning of authorship.** Cooper's life (1789-1851) was inclosed by Irving's, for he was born six years later and died eight years earlier. When he was little more than a year old, his father took his large family—Cooper was the eleventh of twelve children—to the shore of Otsego Lake, New York, where he had bought a tract after the Revolution. It was uncleared country, but here Judge Cooper laid out what developed into Cooperstown, established a big estate, and built a pretentious house. His scheme of life was aristocratic, more like that of the first Virginia settlers than like that of the Massachusetts Puritans. Here the boy grew up in an ambitious home, but among rough frontier surroundings, until he needed better schooling than Cooperstown could offer. To prepare for Yale College he was sent to Albany and put into the charge of the rector of St. Peter's Church. Under this gentleman he gained not only the "book learning" for which he went, but also a

“further sense of the gentry’s point of view—a point of view which throughout his life made him a harsh critic of defects in his country even while he was passionately loyal to it. At thirteen he was admitted to Yale. This sounds as if he was a precocious child, but there was really nothing unusual in the performance, for the colleges were hardly more than advanced academies where most of the students received their degrees well before they were twenty. This was the institution which John Trumbull (who had passed his examinations at seven!) had held up to scorn in his “Progress of Dulness” a few years before, and where his hero, Tom Brainless,

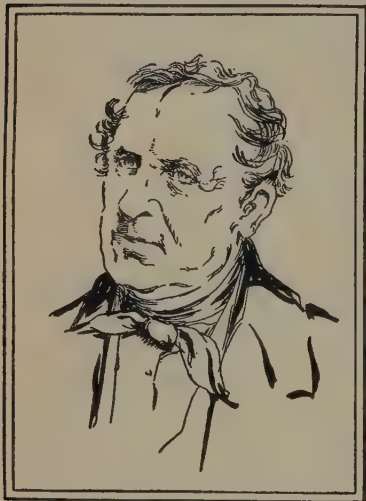
Four years at college dozed away  
In sleep, and slothfulness and play;

but even from here Cooper’s unstudious and disorderly ways caused his dismissal in his second year. His formal schooling was now ended, and it was doubtless much less important to him as a writer than his earlier years in the wilderness west of the Hudson River or those that were to follow on the ocean. In 1806 he was sent to sea for a year on a merchant vessel, and on his return was commissioned a midshipman in the United States Navy. His service lasted for three years, from January 1, 1808, to May, 1811, and was ended by his marriage to the daughter of a Tory who had fought on the British side in the Revolutionary War. Then for nine years he settled down to what seemed like respectable dullness, living part of the time at his father-in-law’s home, part of the time at Cooperstown, and the last three years at Scarsdale, New York.

From these first thirty years of his life there seemed little prospect that he was to become a novelist of world-wide and lasting reputation. There is no record that anyone, even himself, expected him to be a writer. Yet it is quite clear, as one looks back over it, that his preparation had been rich and varied. He had lived on land and on sea, in city and country in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. He had breathed in the stories of the Revolutionary days, grown up on the frontier,



and been a part of America in the making. And from his father, his tutor, and his wife and her family, as well as from his travel, he had learned to see America through critical eyes. He had the material to write about and the experience to make him use it wisely. The one apparently missing factor was the most important of all: there was not the slightest indication that he would ever become a novelist.



JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

**First novels: "Precaution" and "The Spy."** The story of how he began to write is a familiar one. Out of patience with the crudity of an English society novel that he had been reading aloud, he said boastfully that he could write a better one himself. Many another novel-reader and playgoer has talked with equal recklessness after a literary disappointment in the library or the theater, but the remarkable part of the story is that in 1820 Cooper made his boast good. The resultant novel, "Precaution," was

successful in only one respect, that it started Cooper on his career. It was a colorless tale with an English plot, located in English scenes of which he had no first-hand knowledge. It made so little impression on public or publishers that when his next novel was ready in 1821, he had to issue it at his own expense; and he made this next venture, "The Spy," in part at least because of his friends' comment—characteristic of that self-conscious period—that he would have been more patriotic to write on an American theme. America had yet to read a novel that was genuinely homemade in subject and form. To let Cooper tell his own story:

The writer, while he knew how much of what he had done was purely accidental, felt the reproach to be one that, in a measure, was just. As the only atonement in his power, he determined to inflict a second book, whose subject should admit no cavil, not only on the world, but on himself. He chose patriotism for his theme; and to those who read this introduction and the book itself, it is scarcely necessary to add that he [selected his hero] as the best illustration of his subject.

**The Leatherstocking series as a whole.** By means of his story of war times, involving the amazing adventures of Harvey Birch, the spy, Cooper won his public, a fact which is amply proved by the sale of 2500 copies of his third novel, "The Pioneers," on the morning of publication. This story came nearer home to him, for the scenery and the people were those among whom he had lived as a boy at Cooperstown. Working with this familiar material based on the country and the developing life which was a part of his very self, Cooper wrote the first of his famous Leatherstocking series. The five stories, taken together, complete the long epic of the American Indian, to which Longfellow later supplied the earlier chapters in "Hiawatha." For Cooper took up the chronicle where Longfellow was to drop it (see pages 271-273):

Then a darker, drearier vision  
Passed before me, vague and cloud-like;  
I beheld our nation scattered,  
All forgetful of my counsels,  
Weakened, warring with each other:  
Saw the remnants of our people  
Sweeping westward, wild and woful,  
Like the cloud-rack of a tempest,  
Like the withered leaves of Autumn!

It was not a deliberate undertaking, planned from start to finish; it was not written in the order in which the stories occurred—like the long series by Winston Churchill; it did not at the time of writing regard the scout as the central character of

the first book, much less of the four which were to follow it. Cooper did not even seem to appreciate after he had written "The Pioneers" how rich a vein he had struck, for within the next two years he wrote "The Pilot," a sea story, and "Lionel Lincoln, or the Leaguers of Boston," supposed to be the first of a series of thirteen colonial stories which was never carried beyond this point. However, in 1826 he came back to Leatherstocking in "The Last of the Mohicans," second both in authorship and in order of reading, and in 1827 he wrote "The Prairie," on the last days of the scout. It was not till 1840 and 1841 that he completed the series with the first and third numbers, "The Pathfinder" and "The Deerslayer." To summarize: the stories deal in succession with Deerslayer, a young woodsman in the middle of the eighteenth century; then Hawkeye, the hero of "The Last of the Mohicans," a story of the French and Indian War; next, Pathfinder; fourth, Leatherstocking, the hero of "The Pioneers," in the decade just before 1800; and finally with the trapper, who in 1803 left the farm lands of New York to go westward with the emigrants who were attracted by the new government lands of "The Prairie."<sup>1</sup> The list of stories is easy to remember because it runs in alphabetical order.

Cooper's first period of authorship ended with the writing of the second of the series. In a little over six years he had published six novels and had shown promise of all that he was to accomplish in later life. He had attempted four kinds: stories of frontier life, in which he was always successful; sea tales, for which he was peculiarly fitted; historical novels, which he did indifferently well; and studies in social life, in which he had started his career with a failure, but to which he returned again and again like a moth to the flame.

"The Last of the Mohicans"—the key to the story. To the "Last of the Mohicans" time has awarded first place in the long roster of his works. It is the book of Cooper's that is devoted most completely to the "vanishing race." Three passages

<sup>1</sup> See the Five Word Pictures of Natty Bumppo quoted from the five novels in Boynton's "Milestones in American Literature," pp. 153-157.

set and hold the keynote to the story. The first is from the author's introduction: "Of all the tribes named in these pages, there exist only a few half-civilized beings of the Oneidas on the reservation of their people in New York. The rest have disappeared, either from the regions in which their fathers dwelt, or altogether from the earth." The second is a speech from Chingachgook to Hawkeye in the third chapter, where they are first introduced: "Where are the blossoms of these summers?—fallen, one by one: so all of my family departed, each in his turn, to the land of the spirits. I am on the hilltop, and must go down into the valley; and when Uncas follows in my footsteps, there will no longer be any of the blood of the Sagamores, for my boy is the last of the Mohicans." The third is the last speech of the book, by the sage Tamenund: "'It is enough,' he said. 'Go, children of the Lenape, the anger of the Manitou is not done. Why should Tamenund stay? The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the red-men has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans.'"

**The Indian characters.** For many years it was a habit of critics to scoff at Cooper's Indian characters for being romantic and idealized portraits of the red man who had never existed. This judgment may have arisen during the period of Cooper's great personal unpopularity, when nothing was too unfair to please the American public; but, once uttered, it persisted and was quoted from decade to decade by people who cannot have read his books with any attention. It was insisted that the woodcraft which Cooper credited to the Indians was quite beyond human powers; yet later naturalists have recorded time and again marvels quite as incredible as any in Cooper's pages. It was said again and again that their dignity, self-control, tribal loyalty, and reverence for age were overdrawn; yet many another authority has testified to the existence of these virtues. And, finally, it was charged that they were never such a heroic

and superior people as Cooper made them, when, as a matter of fact, real study of his portraits will show that Cooper did not make them half as admirable as he is said to have done. Tamenund is simply a mouthpiece; Uncas and Chingachgook are the only living Indian characters whom he makes at all admirable, but he acknowledges the difference between their standards and the white man's in the murder and scalping of the French sentinel after he had been passed in safety: "'Twould have been a cruel and inhuman act for a white-skin; but 'tis the gift and natur' or an Indian, and I suppose it should not be denied.'" Cooper presents all the other Indians, beneath their formal ways in family, camp, and council, as treacherous and bloodthirsty, a savage people who show their real natures in the Massacre of Fort William Henry, the chief historical event in the book. On this ground he partly explains and partly here justifies the conquest of the red men by the white.

**The other male characters.** The other people of the story are types who appear in all Cooper's novels. Most important is the native, unschooled American:

He has drawn you *one* character, though, that is new,  
One wildflower he's plucked that is wet with the dew  
Of this fresh Western world.

He is an out-of-door creature, who cannot bear town life, a disbeliever in any book but the book of nature, a lover of the woods and mountains, and a worshiper of the God who made them. He has no "theory of life" or of government or of America, but he is just as truly a product of American conditions as the mountain laurel or the goldenrod. He recurs in book after book. The central figure of the Leatherstocking series—Deerslayer, Pathfinder, Hawkeye, Natty Bumppo, and the trapper—is blood brother to Harvey Birch in "The Spy," to Long Tom Coffin in "The Pilot," to Captain Truck in "Homeward Bound" and "Home as Found," and to a similar man in almost every one of the other stories. Quite in contrast to this "wildflower" is a potted plant, of whom Cooper is almost equally fond. This



is the polished gentleman of the world, such as Montcalm, who represents the culture and manners that the New World needed. Cooper admired such a man beyond words, but presented him very badly; he made an idea of him rather than a living character, a veneer of manners without any solid backing—thin, shiny, and hollow. One feels no affection for him and very little respect. He annoys one by so evidently thanking God that he is not as other men. Another type is David Gamut, a man who is made grotesque by his fondness for his own narrow specialty. David, a teacher of psalm-singing, bores the other characters by continually "talking shop" and breaks into melody in and out of season, capping the climax by chanting so noisily during the massacre that the Indians regard him as a harmless lunatic and spare him then and thereafter. Dr. Sitgreaves, of "The Spy," and Owen Bat, the doctor of "The Prairie," are struck from the same die. Finally, among the leading types must be mentioned the "females."

**The "female" characters.** The use of this word, which sounds odd and uncouth today, was general a hundred years ago, when "lady" was reserved to indicate a class distinction and "woman" had not become the common noun; but the change is not merely one of name, for the women of books and the women of life were far less self-reliant than the women of the twentieth century. Then they were frankly regarded not only as dependents but as inferiors. A striking evidence of this can be found in the pages on Woman in Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations." The majority of the quotations are culled from poets who wrote before the rise of the woman's movement, and the tone of the passages taken as a whole is very condescending. "Women are lovely at their best," the poets seemed to agree, "but, after all, they are merely—women. And at less than their best, the least said about them the better." Cooper was by no means behind his time in his attitude; indeed, he was, if anything, rather ahead of it. His feeling for them seems to have been that expressed in the famous passage from "Marmion" of which the first half is usually all that is quoted:

O woman! in our hours of ease,  
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please.

. . . . .

When pain and anguish wring the brow,  
A ministering angel thou!

In the ordinary situations in Cooper's novels his "females" were things to patronize and flatter, but in times of stress they showed heroic powers of endurance. The three introduced in the first chapter of "The Spy" were gifted, according to the text, with "softness and affability," "internal innocence and peace," and expressed themselves by blushes and timid glances. The two "lovely beings" of the "Last of the Mohicans" are even more gushingly described. "The flush which still lingered above the pines in the western sky was not more bright nor delicate than the bloom" on Alice's cheeks; and Cora was the fortunate possessor of "a countenance that was exquisitely regular and dignified, and surpassingly beautiful." In the chapter that follows they are not referred to simply, but always with a bow and a smile—"the reluctant fair one," "the dark-eyed Cora," and as they finally disappear on horseback through the woods the reader is expected not to laugh at the final ridiculous tableau of "the light and graceful forms of the females waving among the trees." Of course the readers to whom Cooper addressed this did not laugh. They realized that in speaking of women he was simply using the conventional language of the day, which was not intended to mean what it said; that he was introducing a pair of normal, lovely girls, and that the best to be required of a normal girl was that she should be lovely—"only this and nothing more." There was no evidence that Cora and Alice had minds; they were not expected to; instead they had warm hearts and "female beauty." Lowell was hardly unfair in his comment:

And the women he draws from one model don't vary,  
All sappy as maples and flat as a prairie.

But it must be admitted that in Cooper's time the model was a prevailing one, and that it was only in his old age that women began, in any large numbers, to depart from it.

**The adventure material of the stories.** Cooper was all his life a more and more conscious critic of American character and American conditions. As a result his stories take hold of the reader for the very simple reason that they are based on actual life and real people. They had, moreover, and still have, the added advantage that they are based on a life that was fascinating and unfamiliar to the great majority of his readers, and so, though realistic in their details, they have the effect of distant romance. All through the eighteenth century, and particularly through the last third of it, literature had been inclining



FYNMERE, FENIMORE COOPER'S HOME  
AT COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK

to dwell on the joys of life in field and forest. Addison and his followers had handed on the spell of the old ballads of primitive adventure. Pope had dabbled with the "poor Indian," and Goldsmith had written his celebrated line about "Niagara's . . . thundering sound." Burns and Wordsworth had confined their poems to the peasantry among whom they lived. Irving's reply to English writers on America (see page 111) alluded to the frequency of books on distant lands and peoples. So when Cooper began publishing his stories of adventure in untrodden lands, he found an attentive public not only in America but in England, and not only in England but all over Europe, where,

as soon as his novels appeared, they were reprinted in thirty-four different places and in a dozen or more languages.

**The construction of the stories.** With the advantage of this fresh material Cooper combined his ability to tell an exciting story. There is nothing intricate or skillful about his plots as pieces of composition. In fact they seldom if ever come up to any striking finish. They do not so much conclude as die, and as a rule they "die hard." They are made up of strings of exciting adventures in which characters whom the reader likes are put into danger and then rescued from it. The best material for a conclusion of the "Last of the Mohicans" lies in the middle of the book, with the restoring of Alice and Cora to their father's arms at Fort William Henry, but the story is only half long enough at that point, so the author separated them again by means of the massacre and carried it on more and more slowly to the required length and to the deaths of Cora and the last of the Mohicans. The last chapter of "The Spy" was actually written, printed, and put into page form some weeks before the latter part of the story had even been planned. Cooper's devices for starting and ending the exciting scenes seem often commonplace, partly because so many later writers have imitated him in using them. Mark Twain, in "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," said derisively that the Leatherstocking Tales might well have been named "The Broken Twig" series because villain and hero so often discover each other as the result of a misstep on a snapping branch. He might have substituted "A Shot Rang Out" as his title, on account of the frequency with which episodes are thus started or finished. Bret Harte's burlesque in his "Condensed Novels" shows how broadly Cooper laid his methods open to attack from the scoffers. Yet the fact remains that few who have come to scoff could have remained to rival Cooper. He has enlisted millions of readers in dozens of languages; he has fascinated them by the doings of woodsmen who were as mysteriously skillful as the town-bred Sherlock Holmes; he has thrilled by the genuine excitement of deadly struggles and hairbreadth

'scapes; and the sale of his books a hundred years after he first addressed the public would gladden the heart of many a modern novelist.

**Cooper as a critic and as a defender of America.** Another side of Cooper's career is interesting as a chapter in the literary history of America. It has already been mentioned that he did not give up the writing of novels on social life with the unsuccessful "Precaution." Lowell refers to this fact in the "Fable for Critics":

There is one thing in Cooper I like, too, and that is  
That on manners he lectures his countrymen gratis:  
Not precisely so either, because, for a rarity,  
He is paid for his tickets in unpopularity.  
Now he may overcharge his American pictures,  
But you'll grant there's a good deal of truth in his  
    strictures;  
And I honor the man who is willing to sink  
Half his present repute for the freedom to think,  
And, when he has thought, be his cause strong or weak,  
Will risk t'other half for the freedom to speak,  
Caring naught for what vengeance the mob has in store,  
Let that mob be the upper ten thousand or lower.

**The effect of his residence abroad.** In 1826 Cooper went abroad with his family, staying on the other side for nearly six and a half years. His reputation was well established, and he left with the best wishes of his countrymen and the respect of the many foreigners who knew him through his books. He was an ardent believer in his own land and in the theory of its government, and at the same time he was an admirer, as he had been taught to be, of the dignity and the traditions of the Old World. It was to be expected that he would grow wiser with travel and that his later works, not losing their interest as stories, would be enriched by a deeper and mellower feeling for humankind. But he had already displayed one weakness: he was extremely positive in the opinions he held and brutally untactful in expressing them. If he had ever heard of the soft



answer that turneth away wrath, he felt contempt for it. Thus, for example, in the preface to "The Pioneers" he referred to the least of authors' ills, that critics contradict each other even when pointing out his defects: "There I am, left like an ass between two locks of hay; so that I have determined to relinquish my animate nature, and remain stationary, like a lock of hay between two asses." The fruit of travel was naturally a more vivid sense of the differences between American and European ways, a fertile crop of opinions, a warlike assertion of them, and an unhappy series of quarrels with all sorts of Americans—business men, editors, naval officers, congressmen, and the majority of his readers, a vast army of representatives of the upper ten thousand and the lower.

**The consequent novels.** During the first three years abroad he went on, under the headway gained at home, with three novels on American themes—one in the Leatherstocking series, one on Puritan life in New England, and one sea story. Then he went off on a side issue and sacrificed the next ten years to books which are very interesting side lights on literary history but very defective novels. The whole sequence started with Cooper's resentment at the "certain condescension in foreigners" which was to make Lowell smart nearly forty years later. To meet this, and particularly the condescension of the English, he left the field of fiction to write "Notions of the Americans; Picked up by a Traveling Bachelor." It failed of its purpose because it was too complacent about America and now and then too offensive about England, but the underlying trouble with it was its defiant tone. A man could hardly make friends for America when he was in the temper to write of Englishmen, "We have good reason to believe, there exists a certain querulous class of readers who consider even the most delicate and reserved commendations of this western world as so much praise unreasonably and dishonestly abstracted from themselves." Cooper never could refrain from "the retort of abuse" against which Irving had advised in the "Sketch Book." Then followed three novels located in Venice, Switzerland, and

Germany: "The Bravo," "The Headsman," and "The Heidenmauer"—all designed to show how charming was Old World tradition and how mistaken was its undemocratic scheme of life. They were failures, like "Precaution," because Cooper could not write an effective novel which attempted to prove anything. It was his gift to tell a good story well and to build it out of the material in the midst of which he had grown up.



ST. PAUL'S CHURCH AND STAGES ON BROADWAY, 1831

The truth and the harshness of his criticisms on American life. By the time he was ready to come back to America he had become kinked and peevish. The story of his controversies is too long for detailing in this chapter. The chief literary result of it is the pair of stories "Homeward Bound" and "Home as Found." The point of them, for they again were written to prove something, was to expose the crudities of a commercialized America. There is no question that the country was crude and raw (see pages 99-102). A period of such rapid development was bound to produce for the time poor architecture, bad man-

ners, shifty business, superficial learning, and questionable politics. Many other critics, home and foreign, were telling the truth about America, to its great discomfort. Cooper's picture of Aristabulus Bragg was probably not unfair to hundreds of his countrymen:

This man is an epitome of all that is good and all that is bad, in a very large class of his fellow citizens. He is quick-witted, prompt in action, enterprising in all things in which he has nothing to lose, but wary and cautious in all things in which he has a real stake, and ready to turn not only his hand, but his heart and his principles, to anything that offers an advantage. With them, literally, "Nothing is too high to be aspired to, nothing too low to be done." He will run for governor or for town clerk, just as opportunities occur, is expert in all the practices of his profession, has had a quarter's dancing, with three years in the classics, and turned his attention toward medicine and divinity, before he finally settled down to law. Such a compound of shrewdness, impudence, common-sense, pretension, humility, cleverness, vulgarity, kind-heartedness, duplicity, selfishness, law-honesty, moral fraud, and mother wit, mixed up with a smattering of learning and much penetration in practical things, can hardly be described, as any one of his prominent qualities is certain to be met by another quite as obvious that is almost its converse. Mr. Bragg, in short, is purely a creature of circumstances.

The weakness of Cooper's criticisms on America is not that they were unjust, but that they were so evidently ill-tempered and bad-mannered. He made the utter mistake of locating the returning Europeans, the accusers of America, in Templeton Hall, which was the name of his own country place. He had a quarrel with the villagers over the use of a picnic ground belonging to him and dragged the quarrel into the story. The public was only too ready to take it as a personal utterance when he made one of his characters say:

I should prefer the cold, dogged domination of English law, with its fruits, the heartlessness of a sophistication without parallel, to being trampled on by every arrant blackguard that may happen to traverse this valley in his wanderings after dollars.

**Last years, and conclusion.** It is a misfortune that most men and women who are willing to risk reputation for the freedom to think and speak are eccentric in other respects. They are unusual first of all in having minds so independent that they presume to disagree with the majority even in silence. They are more unusual still in having the courage to disagree aloud. When they have said their say, however, their neighbors begin to carp at them, respectable people to pass by on the other side, and the newspapers to distort what they have said and then abuse them for what they never uttered. The honest and truly reckless talkers, stung to the quick, feel injured and innocent, talk extravagantly, rely more and more on their own judgments and less and less on the facts, and sooner or later lose their influence if they do not become outcasts. In the end they have the courage and honesty with which they started, a few deploring friends, and a thousand enemies who hate them with an honest and unjustified hatred. It is a tragic round which all but the most extraordinary of free speakers seem doomed to travel. And Cooper did not escape it. Yet he did have the strength and good fortune to pass out of this vale of controversy toward the end of his life. With 1842 his campaign against the public ceased — and theirs against him. He spent his last years happily at Cooperstown and slowly returned into an era of good feeling. It was in these later years that Lowell paid him the well-deserved tribute quoted above. He was really a great patriot. If his love of America led him into the sea of troubles, it was the same love that made him the successful writer of a masterly series of American stories. It is the native character of the man that is worth remembering and the native quality of his books that earned him a wide and lasting fame.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What early influences tended to make Cooper see things from the point of view of an aristocrat and a conservative?
2. What literary material had he unconsciously gathered during the thirty years before he became an author?

3. In his first three novels how did Cooper come nearer and nearer to his own experience in his choice of subject?

4. How long was it from the first to the last of the Leatherstocking series? In what order should the novels be read?

5. What other famous story-series can you recall? What poem-series, play-series, novel-series for children and for adults?

6. What are the three key passages to the "Last of the Mohicans" mentioned on page 131. What reasons had Cooper for placing them just where he did?

7. What effect did Cooper's life abroad have on his judgment of conditions at home?

8. What is the difference between the tone of Cooper's criticisms on American life and the tone of Irving's?

9. What is a purpose novel, and what is a problem novel? Which kind did Cooper occasionally write? What are some notable examples of either kind in the fiction of today?

10. Why was it bad policy for Cooper to introduce his quarrel with his townsmen into one of his novels? Why was it inartistic?

11. Read Mark Twain's essay on "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," and decide how fair it is.

12. Read the prefaces to several of Cooper's novels for the light they will throw on his aggressive tactlessness.

13. Assistance in answering the following questions may be found in the Chronological Outlines at the end of Chapter XII, and Chronological Chart No. II, p. 381:

a. What was the relation of the span of Cooper's life to that of Irving's? What was the relation of their most productive periods? Note how often their names appear together in the Outlines.

b. Name one work of each of the writers mentioned in the text (p. 135) who by using adventure material had helped to prepare the way for a favorable reception for Cooper's American stories.

c. What well-known English novel was published the year of Cooper's first novel?

d. What great European statesman died the year Cooper wrote "The Spy"? What great statesman in our own country died the year he wrote the "Last of the Mohicans"?

e. How far west had the Union extended by the time Cooper wrote the last two books of the Leatherstocking Tales? (Can be answered correctly from Section III of the Outlines.)



## CHAPTER XI

### WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT (1794-1878)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT. *Thanatopsis*, *To a Waterfowl*, *Hymn to Death*, *June*, *Hymn of the City*, *To the Fringed Gentian*, *The Battle-Field*, *O Mother of a Mighty Race*, *The Planting of the Apple-Tree*, *The Poet*, *Abraham Lincoln*, *Robert of Lincoln*.

These and other poems are to be found in the following collections:

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 158-178. Ginn and Company.

BOYNTON, P. H. *American Poetry*, pp. 169-194. Charles Scribner's Sons.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 239-254. Ginn and Company.

PAGE, C. H. *Chief American Poets*, pp. 1-35. Houghton Mifflin Company.

STEDMAN, E. C. *American Anthology*, pp. 53-69. Houghton Mifflin Company.

In reading "*Thanatopsis*" what difference do you find in Bryant's references to the time after death in (1) the original poem, lines 17 to 66, and (2) the last stanza, added four years later? Could one be described as pagan and one as puritan?

Read Bryant's "*To a Waterfowl*," remembering that to the youthful poet the lines had a very definite, personal application.

In Bryant's early poems, particularly in such as "*June*," "*Hymn of the City*," and "*To the Fringed Gentian*," note how often and unexpectedly the idea of death appears.

Note the self-centered quality in "*To a Waterfowl*," "*The Yellow Violet*," and "*To the Fringed Gentian*."

Read Bryant's "*Battle-Field*" and "*Hymn of the City*" and Wordsworth's sonnet "*Composed upon Westminster Bridge*" for different but not conflicting treatments of the same idea.

How does Bryant's "*Poet*" explain why he wrote no popular verse for the journals like that written by Freneau and later by Whittier and Lowell?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

Irving, Cooper, and Bryant in New York

Bryant's early life

Boyhood and education

First venture in New York

Bryant's early poetry

Somber and religious in tone

Sentimental and self-centered

The best of it not imitative in form

Bryant's later poetry

Concerned more with humanity and less with self

Many poems dedicated to America

Nature poems less somber

Poems of old age

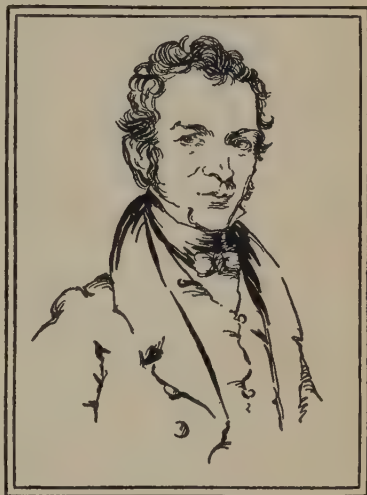
Bryant's eminence in his later years

Summary

**Irving, Cooper, and Bryant in New York.** The mention of Irving, Cooper, and Bryant as fellow representatives of New York is likely to mislead students into thinking of them as literary friends. As a matter of fact they seem not to have had any more contact than any other three educated residents of the city. They were not unsociable men, but each went his own social way. Until his last ten years Cooper was leading member of a literary club of which he had been the founder. Irving, without going to the pains of organizing a group, was the natural center of one which delighted in his company and followed his ways of thinking and writing. Bryant, instead of being drawn after either of these older men, stepped into journalism, becoming a friend of the great editors and the political leaders. Irving was the only one of the three who was born and bred in town. Cooper and Bryant were not sons of New York; they were among the first of its long list of famous adopted children.

**Bryant's early life—boyhood and education.** Bryant (1794–1878) was born at Cummington, Massachusetts. His descent can be traced to the earliest Plymouth families, and on his

mother's side to Priscilla Alden. His father was a much-loved country doctor, the third of the family in recent generations to follow this budding profession (see pages 311, 312). He was a man of dignities in his town, a state representative and senator, and a welcome friend of the Boston book-lovers. His services were so freely given, however, that he had little money to spend on his boy's education. This was carried on, according to a common custom, under charge of clergymen, though not the least important teaching came direct from the father's guidance of his reading and criticism of his writing. Bryant's talents began to show promise while he was still a boy, for he read eagerly, and in his early teens wrote a number of "pieces" which were more or less widely circulated in print. One of these, "The Embargo," a political satire address to President



WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

An early portrait

Jefferson, ran to two editions and seemed so mature that his father's friends were called on to certify to it as the work of a boy of thirteen. In these years Bryant made Alexander Pope his adored model, and for so young an imitator he succeeded remarkably well. A little later he fell under the influence of a group of minor Englishmen who have rather wickedly been nicknamed the "Graveyard Poets" because of the persistency with which they versified on death, the grave, and the after-life. "Thanatopsis," written before he was eighteen, was a reflection of and a response to certain lines of one of these men, Kirke White, who had deeply stirred his imagination.

Once again it was hard to persuade the literary world that young Bryant was the actual author. "Thanatopsis" and the "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood" were published in the *North American Review* without signature, according to the custom of the day. The editors had requested contributions from the elder Bryant, and he had found these verses unfinished at home and had sent them on after copying them in his own handwriting. The more famous poem so impressed the editors that, far from believing it the work of an American boy, Richard H. Dana, on hearing it read aloud, said to his colleague, "Ah, Phillips, you have been imposed upon; no one on this side the Atlantic is capable of writing such verses." In the meantime Bryant had been admitted at fifteen to the sophomore class at Williams College, had withdrawn at the end of a year intending to enter Yale the next autumn, had been unable to carry out the plan through lack of funds, and had studied law and been admitted to the bar. While still in doubt as to his choice of profession he had written the lines "To a Waterfowl," which were later published in the *North American*, following the acceptance of "Thanatopsis." He became a lawyer not through any love of the profession, but because it seemed a reasonable way to earn a living in a day when one could not hope to live by his pen. He practiced for nine years, never with any real enthusiasm, describing himself in the midst of these years as

. . . forced to drudge for the dregs of men,  
And scrawl strange words with the barbarous pen,  
And mingle among the jostling crowd,  
Where the sons of strife are subtle and loud.

**First venture in New York.** His discontent with the law was increased by the applause which greeted his magazine poems and by the compliment of an invitation to deliver the Phi Beta Kappa poem at Harvard in 1821. Finally, in 1825, he went down to New York in the hope of making a success of a new periodical there. In spite of his associate editorship

the *New York Review and Athenæum Magazine* was as short-lived as scores of others. It was a bad time in America for such a venture. The country was flooded with English publications and American editions of English works. The public was not educated to the idea of magazines, nor the publishers to the methods of making them pay. They were unattractive in form and as heavy in contents as the name of Bryant's experiment. After the collapse he returned for a short time to the practice of law, but in 1826 he accepted the assistant editorship of the *New York Evening Post*, three years later became editor, and continued with it until his death in 1878. He was the first nineteenth-century man of letters to enter the field of American journalism, and he played a highly distinguished part in its history.

**Bryant's early poetry.** When Bryant became editor-in-chief of the *New York Evening Post* he was thirty-five years old. He had written about one third of the poetry saved in the collected editions and about one half of the better-known poems on which his reputation rests. This portion is worth considering by itself, because it has a character of its own and is quite different from his later writings. In the first place it was consciously religious in tone. Bryant came from Puritan ancestry. He was brought up to believe in a stern God who had doomed all mankind to eternal punishment and who ruled them relentlessly, sometimes in sorrow but more often in anger. To the Puritans life on earth was a prelude to eternity, and eternity was to be spent possibly in bliss but probably in torment. They were truly a people "whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests." His mind and imagination were therefore wide open to the influence of Kirke White and the other "Graveyard Poets." "Thanatopsis," or "A Glimpse of Death," was composed under the eye of God as Bryant knew him. In setting down "When thoughts of the last bitter hour come like a blight over thy spirit," he was not indulging in any far-fetched fancy; he



was alluding to what the minister brought home to him in two sermons every Sunday and to the unfailing subject of discussion at the mid-week prayer meeting. And when he wrote of approaching the grave "sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust," he was writing of a trust which needed to be especially strong to face the thought of possible damnation.

**Somber and religious in tone.** In a broad sense all true poetry is religious, for it deals with truths that lie beneath life and leads to higher thinking and better living, but the religion of the youthful Bryant was specialized in a single creed. The point is strikingly illustrated by the "Hymn to Death." When he was twenty-five years old, he wrote the first four fifths of this poem, a meditation based on Puritan theology. "All must die," he said, "even those one loves; but death is really God's instrument to punish the wicked. Oppressors, idolaters, atheists, perjurers, revelers, slanderers, the sons of violence and fraud are struck down."

Thus, from the first of time, hast thou been found  
On virtue's side; the wicked, but for thee,  
Had been too strong for the good; the great of earth  
Had crushed the weak for ever.

Suddenly Bryant's father died while still in the height of his powers and as the result of exposure in meeting his duties as a country doctor. In his sorrow his own youthful verses seemed to him a bitter mockery:

Shuddering I look  
On what is written, yet I blot not out  
The desultory numbers; let them stand,  
The record of an idle revery.

**Sentimental and self-centered.** This leads to the second characteristic of Bryant's earlier verse—more often than not it was self-conscious and self-applied. He wrote to the "Yellow Violet" and devoted five stanzas to the flower, but ended with three more of self-analysis. The stanzas "To a Water-

fowl" have a general and beautiful application, but they were pointed in his mind by the thought that he needed aid to "lead my steps aright" in the choice of his life's vocation. Even the modest autumn flower, the "Fringed Gentian," reminded him of the autumn of his own life and the hope that he might do as the flower and look to heaven when the hour of death drew near. This was the voice of youth which takes life as a personal matter and assumes, out of sheer inexperience, that to his wants "the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow." Maturity makes the wise man lift his eyes unto the hills whence cometh his help, instead of continually brooding on his own hopes and fears. But this habit of self-examination was natural not only to the young Puritan, vaguely dissatisfied with the barren existence of a country lawyer; it was closely akin to the sentimentalism of the age (see pages 115-116). Bryant was like many of the late eighteenth-century poets, dramatists, and novelists in his belief that quickness of emotion was admirable in itself and that the tenderer feelings were marks of refinement. Even after he had settled in the city, he looked back with a glance of approval to the days when the springs of feeling were filled to the brim.

I cannot forget with what fervid devotion

I worshipped the visions of verse and of fame;  
Each gaze at the glories of earth, sky, and ocean,  
To my kindled emotions was wind over flame.

And deep were my musings in life's early blossom,

Mid the twilight of mountain-groves wandering long;  
How thrilled my young veins, and how throbbed my full bosom,  
When o'er me descended the spirit of song.

There is a touch of self-approval in his continual references to his thrills and awes and adorations and to the "pleasurable melancholy," as Poe called it, with which he enjoyed life, but we shall see that life in the city changed this for something more positive.

**The best of the early poetry not imitative in form.** Before turning away from this period, however, the student should

take heed of Bryant's poetic form. The remarkable thing about "Thanatopsis" was not that Bryant entertained the thoughts it contains, or that he aspired to write them, but that he expressed them in verses that were so beautiful and so different from anything ever written before in America. It was their form at which Dana exclaimed in his much-quoted remark to Phillips in the *North American Review* office. When Bryant was a boy our native writers were, all but Freneau, in the habit of imitating the English poets and essayists who had set the style a hundred years before. The young American who felt a drawing to literature saturated himself in the writings of Addison, Pope, Goldsmith, Johnson, and their followers (see pages 55, 78, 106, and 107). The verses of these men were neat, clean-cut, and orderly, and filed down their pages like regiments of soldiers on dress parade. They went along in rimed pairs, with a place to draw breath near the middle of each line, a slight pause at the end of the first line, and a full stop at the end of the second. As a fashion, to be sure, it was no more natural than the high, powdered head-dresses and hoop skirts which prevailed with the ladies at the same time, but it was a courtly literary convention, and it could be acquired by any writer who was patient and painstaking. In 1785 the best that John Trumbull could hope for America was that it might produce copyists of these Englishmen, and he expressed his hope in the usual set style (see page 80)—like a boy scout in uniform dreaming of the day when he and his fellows may develop into Leonard Woodses and Pershings. And Joseph Rodman Drake, writing in one of the years when "Thanatopsis" was lying unpublished in Dr. Bryant's desk, put his desire into an even more complex measure, a modification of the Spenserian stanza:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A Spenserian stanza is made up of nine lines, the first eight of ten syllables, the ninth of twelve syllables; the first and third lines riming together, the second, fourth, fifth, and seventh, and the sixth, eighth, and ninth. Blank verse is made up of iambic pentameter lines (for example, "For you her fields are green, and fair her skies") without rime, the pauses coming sometimes at the ends of lines and sometimes within them.

Go! kneel a worshipper at nature's shrine!  
For you her fields are green, and fair her skies!  
For you her rivers flow, her hills arise!  
And will you scorn them all, to pour forth tame  
And heartless lays of feigned or fancied sighs?  
And will you cloud the muse? nor blush for shame  
To cast away renown, and hide your head from fame?

Bryant, it will be remembered, made his first poetic flights in the style of Pope, and he did well enough to be apparently on the highroad of old-fashioned imitation. Then suddenly, while still a boy, he lifted himself out of the rut of rime and began writing a free, fluent "blank verse." It is the same five-stressed measure which Pope used,—the measure of Shakespeare too, "*If music be the food of love, play on,*"—but it is without rime, and the pauses come where the sense demands instead of where the verse pattern dictates. In the passages just cited from Trumbull and Drake there is only one line where the sense runs over without a slight pause,—the sense is forced to conform to the rhythm; but in "*Thanatopsis,*" although the rhythm is quite regular, the pauses occur at all sorts of places, and seldom at the line-ends. As Bryant set down the first seven and four-fifth lines, for example, they read:

To him who in the love of nature holds  
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks  
A various language; for his gayer hours  
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile  
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides  
Into his darker musings, with a mild  
And healing sympathy, that steals away  
Their sharpness, ere he is aware;

but broken into groups, as one would read them, they fall:

To him who in the love of nature  
Holds communion with her visible forms,  
She speaks a various language;  
For his gayer hours she has a voice of gladness,

And a smile and eloquence of beauty,  
And she glides into his darker musings,  
With a mild and healing sympathy,  
That steals away their sharpness,  
Ere he is aware.

Bryant's method of composing verses that were regular in rhythm, but as irregular as common speech in their pauses, was nothing new in poetry. Shakespeare had written his plays almost entirely in this way, and Milton all of "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained," and the later English poets, most notably Wordsworth, had just returned to it; but in America it was as unfamiliar as the "free verse"<sup>1</sup> which is puzzling a good many readers today partly because it is printed in units of meaning instead of units of measure. No wonder that Dana was surprised at such verses "on this side of the Atlantic."

**Bryant's later poetry.** When Bryant went down into the crowded activity of New York City, the general tone of his work began to change. The things that he was doing interested him as the practice of law never had done. The editorship of the *Evening Post* made him not merely a news-vender but a molder of public thought, and his entrance into the world of opinion gave him more of an interest in life itself and less in his own emotions. Very soon he wrote the "Hymn of the City," to record his discovery that God lived in the town as well as in the country and that He was the God of life quite as much as the God of death.

Thy Spirit is around,  
Quickening the restless mass that sweeps along;  
And this eternal sound—  
Voices and footfalls of the numberless throng—  
Like the resounding sea,  
Or like the rainy tempest, speaks of Thee.

<sup>1</sup>Free verse is verse which follows no fixed pattern, varying the rhythm and length of line to fit the theme and using rime or doing without it at the will of the poet.



**Concerned more with humanity and less with self.** Then, in "The Battle-Field" (1837) and "The Antiquity of Freedom" (1842), he moved on to what was a new thought in his verse. He was still interested in beauty, whether it were the beauty of nature or the beauty of holiness; but as a man who had plunged into the thick of things he became for the first time wide-awake to the idea that as the world grows older it grows wiser, and that the well-rounded life cannot be content simply to contemplate the beauties of June, for it must also



BROADWAY, NEW YORK, 1840

have some part in the struggle for justice. He had grown into nothing less than a new idea of God. As a young Puritan he had felt Him to be a power outside, who managed things. He had been content to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and then he had turned his back on earth and meditated about heaven. But now he aspired to do with heaven what Addison had attempted to do with "philosophy," and bring it down from the clouds into the hearts of men. When he wrote, in "The Battle-Field," "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again," he meant, as the rest of the poem shows, not the old truth of centuries but the unfamiliar truth which the new age must set on its throne.

There is perhaps no more striking illustration of the adoption of so-called new truth than in the world's attitude toward the holding of property in human life. Up to the time of Bryant's birth slaveholding had been practiced in all the United States, by the Puritans of New England as well as

by the Cavaliers of the South. During the colonial days in both regions the Bible had been accepted as final authority. Orthodox people assumed that what it counseled and what it did not prohibit was right, and what it condemned was wrong; and, judged on these grounds, slavery was apparently sanctioned in the Bible. In spite of this, many leaders, both North and South, protested before 1800 against holding property in human life (see pages 41 and 87). As time went on, largely on account of the climate and the nature of the industries, slavery waned in the North and thrived in the South. Then in New England the great agitation arose; but still, in Massachusetts as well as in Virginia, the men whose bank accounts were involved defended human bondage on Scriptural grounds, protesting violently against

. . . creeds that dare to teach  
What Christ and Paul refrained to preach.

Yet in the end the principle of freedom for which the Revolution was fought was reaffirmed in the Civil War through freeing the slaves who were serving the sons of the Revolution.

Bryant became painfully conscious of the many issues to be fought out in the cause of liberty, and in the "Antiquity of Freedom" he wrote of the eternal vigilance and the eternal conflict needed to maintain it.

Oh! not yet  
May'st thou unbrace thy corslet, nor lay by  
Thy sword; nor yet, O Freedom! close thy lids  
In slumber; for thine enemy never sleeps,  
And thou must watch and combat till the day  
Of the new earth and heaven.

That combat is still on; the right of the subject—including woman—to a voice in the government, the right of the laborer to a fair return for his work, and the right of the smaller nation to undisturbed independence are today among the uppermost problems that occupy the mind of the world.

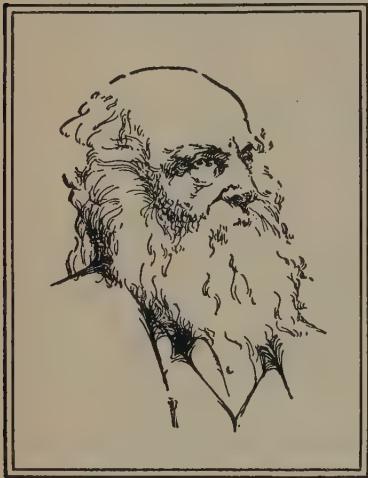
Many poems dedicated to America. Like many of his thoughtful countrymen Bryant founded his loyalty to America on the hope that in this new land the seed of new truth would fall on fertile soil. In "Earth," composed when he was in Italy, he wrote:

O thou,  
Who sittest far beyond the Atlantic deep,  
Among the sources of thy glorious streams,  
My native Land of Groves! a newer page  
In the great record of the world is thine;  
Shall it be fairer? Fear, and friendly Hope,  
And Envy, watch the issue, while the lines  
By which thou shalt be judged, are written down.

The number and bulk of his poems dedicated to America are not so great as those by Freneau, or Whittier and Lowell, or Timrod and Lanier, but his smaller group are as distinguished and as representative as an equal number by any of the others except, possibly, Lowell. In "O Mother of a Mighty Race" he alluded again to the envy and unfriendliness of the older nations, which disturbed him as it did Irving and Cooper. In the face of it he tried, with less success than Irving, to keep his own temper, taking comfort in the thought that the down-trodden and oppressed of Europe could find shelter here and a chance to live. As a journalist he was a strong champion of Abraham Lincoln long before the conservative East had given him general support; and when the Civil War came on, he sounded "Our Country's Call" and encouraged all within sound of his voice in "the grim resolve to guard it well." During the war he wrote from time to time verses that were full of devotion to the right and quite free from the note of hate that poisons most war poetry; and at the end he mourned "The Death of Lincoln" no less fervently than he rejoiced at "The Death of Slavery."

Nature poems less somber. Aside from these poems and others of their kind, which make the connection between Bryant the editor and Bryant the poet, he continued to write

on his old themes—nature and the individual life. There was no complete reversal of attitude; some of the later poems were reminders of some of the earlier ones. Yet a real change came after he had mixed with the world. At first he was inclined to lament the loss of the old life, seeming to forget how irksome it had been when he was in the midst of it. In



WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

A later portrait

such personal verses as "I cannot forget with what fervent devotion" and "I broke the spell that held me long" he was indulging in the luxury of mild self-pity. "In my younger days I had lots of time, but no money and few friends. Now I have friends and an income, but alas, I have no time." This was but a temporary mood, however. It is quite clear from his later poems as a body that in the best sense he enjoyed life more in town than in country. This is proved by the fact that nature did not continue to sug-

gest mournful or even sober thoughts. "The Planting of the Apple-Tree" is serenely recorded in "quaint old rhymes." Instead of saying, as in his earlier manner, "We plant this apple tree, but we plant it only for a few short years. Then it will die, like all mankind. Perhaps I may be buried beneath its shade," he said: "Come, let us plant it. It will blossom and bear fruit which will be eaten in cottage and palace, here and abroad. And when it is old, perhaps its aged branches will throw thin shadows on a better world than this is now. Who knows?" The stanzas on "Robert of Lincoln" are not merely free from sadness; they are positively jolly.

**Poems of old age.** In the last years of his long career—he lived to be eighty-four—he seems at first glance to have gone back to his youthful sadness; but this is not really the case, for thoughts which are premature or affected in youth are natural to old age. At eighty-two, in “A Lifetime” and “The Flood of Years,” he actually looked back over many bereavements and forward but a very short way to the life after death. The two poems taken together are an old man’s farewell to the world. Like the poem with which he won his first fame, they present another glimpse of death, but this time it is a fair prospect of

A present in whose reign no grief shall gnaw  
The Heart, and never shall a tender tie  
Be broken.

**Bryant’s eminence in his later years.** When Bryant came to his seventieth birthday there was a notable celebration at the Century Club in New York City. At that time three poems were read by three of his fellow poets—Holmes, Lowell, and Whittier. What they said throws a great deal of light on Bryant’s part in American life and literature. Holmes sang his praises as a poet of nature, a journalist of high ideals, a writer of solemn and majestic verse, whose later works fulfilled the promise of his first great poem. Lowell went a step farther in paying his tribute to Bryant as a poet of faith and freedom and as a citizen who gave life and courage to the nation during the crisis of the Civil War. In this respect the author of “The Battle-Field” was quite as much of a pioneer as in his poems about birds and flowers. He was far ahead of most of his countrymen in his feeling for America as a nation among nations. Finally, Whittier revered Bryant as a man. With all admiration for his art,

His life is now his noblest strain,  
His manhood better than his verse!

In his later years Bryant was one of the best citizens of New York. His striking presence on the streets, with his



white hair and beard and his fine vigor, made poetry real to the crowds who were inclined to think of it as something impersonal that existed only in books. On account of his powers as a public speaker and his place in literature he was often called on to deliver memorial addresses, and was affectionately named "the old man eloquent." His orations on Cooper and Irving were among the first of these. His last was in 1878, at the unveiling of a statue to the Italian patriot Mazzini. As he was returning into his home he fell, receiving injuries from which he died shortly after. It was fitting that his last words should have been in praise of a champion of freedom and that he should have died with the echoes of his countrymen's applause still ringing in his ears.

**Summary.** If the question is raised as to what Bryant's special place was in American literature, the answer cannot be given in any single phrase or neat formula. And this is just as well, for the neater and briefer such formulas are, the less likely they are to suggest the whole truth. A summary of this chapter, however, reënforces the fact that Bryant grew up with his century. As a country boy and country man he was a Puritan sentimentalist, and in most of what he wrote he was dwelling on his own emotions and his own salvation. He was modern, or up-to-date, only in his adoption of the fluent blank verse which was just coming into fashion. As a mature man living in New York he paid more attention to humanity and this world and somewhat less to himself and the next world. And from time to time throughout his life he wrote poems of nature which deserve our attention not because they illustrate history but because each in its way is a thing of beauty and so a joy forever.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What profession did Bryant's father follow, and what poem of Bryant's was especially inspired by his father?
2. When Bryant went to New York, what profession did he leave and what one did he enter? Which was more nearly related to authorship?

3. See the Chronological Chart on the periodicals (p. 449), and note how few magazines founded before 1841 lasted more than ten years. Why do so many more continue to thrive today?

4. What were two features of the general tone of Bryant's early poetry and one striking feature of its form?

5. Compare Bryant's "Thanatopsis" and Lanier's "Marshes of Glynn" (see page 363).

6. What are the chief differences between the heroic couplet, which is the verse of Pope, and blank verse, which is the verse of Wordsworth? Which is the more artificial?

7. What was one natural effect of Bryant's living in New York on his interest in public welfare? Is this evident from any change in his poems?

8. What change in the tone of his poems on nature took place in his later years? Show the contrast between an earlier and a later poem.

9. What earlier poets used blank verse? What other forms did Bryant use? Give examples.

10. Read Bryant's "Song of the Sower," Lanier's "Corn" and Timrod's "Cotton Boll" for evident points of likeness and difference.

11. Compare Bryant's "Robert of Lincoln" and the "Planting of the Apple-Tree" with Freneau's "Wild Honey Suckle" and "To a Caty-did."

12. In answering the following questions the Chronological Outlines at the end of Chapter XII can be used to advantage:

a. What is the relation of Bryant's most important period of authorship to that of Cooper? of Irving? (See Chronological Chart No. II, p. 381.)

b. What two poems by Bryant mentioned in the text and in the Outlines were written considerably before this period began?

c. From the historical events between the years 1805 and 1815 jot down the items which give evidence of the prevailing attitude in the world toward the slave traffic.

d. By 1810 the population of free states exceeded that of slave states by 300,000. Compare this fact with the corresponding facts of 1830.

e. What other American authors with whom you are already familiar from the text were writing at the same time as Bryant?

f. In the years between 1830 and 1844, Bryant's richest period, what foreign authors are familiar names to you? Can you name one great German author, two great French authors, and two or more English?

	JAMES I	CHARLES I	PRO- TECTOR ALEX	CHARLES II	W.M.- MARY II	ANNE GEORGE I	GEORGE II	GEORGE III
	1603 ← → 1625	1649 ← → 1660		1685 → 1689	1702 ← → 1714	1727 ← → 1760		1820 →
	1600 1610 1620 1630 1640 1650 1660 1670 1680 1690 1700 1710 1720 1730 1740 1750 1760 1770 1780 1790 1800							
Thomas Morton (1575?-1646)								
Nathaniel Ward (1578-1652?)								
Roger Williams (1604-1683)								
Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705)								
Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672)								
Increase Mather (1639-1723)								
Cotton Mather (1663-1728)								
Samuel Sewall (1632-1730)								
Sarah Kemble Knight (1666-1727)								
Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)								
Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)								
Michel de Crèvecoeur (1731-1813)								
Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791)								
John Trumbull (1730-1831)								
Philip Freneau (1752-1832)								
Timothy Dwight (1752-1817)								
Joel Barlow (1754-1812)								
Brockden Brown (1771-1810)								
Washington Irving (1783-1859)								
Fitz-Greene Halleck (1790-1867)								
Joseph Rodman Drake (1795-1820)								
J. Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851)								
Wm. Cullen Bryant (1794-1878)								

## CHAPTER XII

EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-1849)

### SUGGESTED READINGS

EDGAR ALLAN POE. *Prose*: The Gold Bug, The Purloined Letter, The Cask of Amontillado. *Poetry*: A Dream within a Dream, Romance, To Helen, Israfel, Lenore, The Raven, Ulalume, The Bells, Annabel Lee.

Also other passages as found in such collections as the following:

BOYNTON, P. H. Milestones in American Literature, pp. 179-210. Ginn and Company.

BOYNTON, P. H. American Poetry, pp. 224-239. Charles Scribner's Sons.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. Readings from American Literature, pp. 254-276. Ginn and Company.

FOERSTER, NORMAN. Chief American Prose Writers, pp. 131-192. Houghton Mifflin Company.

GAMBRILL, J. M. Selections from Poe (Standard English Classics). Ginn and Company.

PAGE, C. H. Chief American Poets, pp. 36-57. Houghton Mifflin Company.

STEDMAN, E. C. An American Anthology, pp. 144-152. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Read any three of Poe's better-known tales and decide on the special vivid effect for which he strove in each.

Read any three of Poe's better-known tales for the element of sadness in each.

Read any three of Poe's better-known tales and see if in each you find a recurring name or phrase or suggestion which serves in the same way that the refrain does in one of the poems; as, for instance, "Nevermore," in "The Raven."

Read any three of Poe's better-known tales and notice whether any of the settings are out of doors and uninclosed. What proportion?

Did Poe employ any one poetic rhythm in a majority of his poems? Note the different line and stanza forms he used. Did the reason for these variations lie in the nature of the various poems, or were they signs of Poe's "whim," to use the word he applied to himself?

Read the six poetic objects of the Imagists, as stated on page 425, and see if many or all of them can be assigned to any poems of Poe.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

Difficulty of placing Poe in a history of American literature

The life of Edgar Allan Poe

Boyhood

Stormy career

Early poetry and tales

Magazine editorships

Later career

Poe's theory of poetry

As applied in his critical writings

As applied to his poems

As applied to his emotional tales

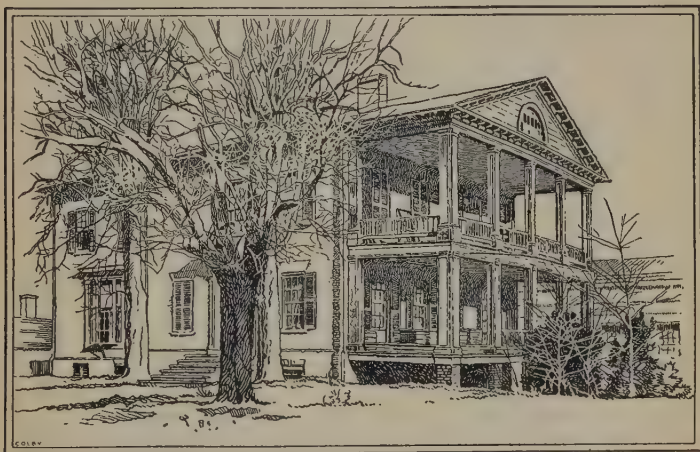
Detective stories

Summary

**Difficulty of placing Poe in a history of American literature.** Where to introduce Edgar Allan Poe in a history of American literature is a good deal of a problem. He was a lonely figure; he did not belong to any group or movement. As far as his poems and tales are concerned, he might just as reasonably have lived a generation earlier or a generation later. In his creative writing he drew his material neither from the past nor from the present, not at all from actual life and very little from books, but almost entirely from his imagination. Yet the oft-made statement that he was in no way related to the course of American literature overlooks one very important side of his work: he took a larger place in the history of the American periodicals than any other writer. His connection with at least four magazines is the most distinguished fact about them; and he was the widest-read and the most feared American book-reviewer of his day. The logical point, then, at which to discuss Poe is between the Knickerbockers and the New Englanders. Locally he was not related to either, although he was born in Boston and worked some years in New York. But in point of time he falls between them, for he wrote during the latter years of Irving and Cooper and before Emerson and his fellows had come to their prime.



**The life of Edgar Allan Poe—boyhood.** Poe was born in Boston, January 19, 1809. His parents were actors—his father a somewhat colorless performer, his mother brought up as the daughter of an actress and moderately successful in light and charming rôles. By 1811 the future poet, a brother two years older, and a sister a year younger were orphans. Each was adopted into a different home—Edgar into that of Mr. John



THE ALLAN MANSION AT RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Allan, a well-to-do Richmond merchant. The boy was given generous attention as an only child. From 1815 to 1820, while his foster-father's business held him in residence across the Atlantic, he was in English schools. Then for five years he was in an academy in Richmond, Virginia, and during 1825 apparently studied under private tutors. Up to the time of his admission to the University of Virginia he was handsome, charming, active-minded, and perhaps somewhat "spoiled." Although only seventeen he had passed through a love affair ending in an engagement broken by the schoolgirl's father.

**Stormy career.** With his year at the university Poe entered on the unfortunate series of mishaps that blighted all the rest

of his stormy career and hastened him to an early and tragic death. He did everything intensely, but though he was methodical and industrious, his method was not equal to his intensity, and from time to time unreasoned or foolish or mad impulses carried him off his balance and into all sorts of trouble. Thus, at the university he stood well in his classes, but he drank to excess and he played cards recklessly and very badly, so that at the year's end his "debts of honor" amounted to over two thousand dollars. Thus, again, after a creditable year and a half in the army, which he seems to have entered for the discipline it would give him, he had earned the highest noncommissioned office of sergeant-major and had secured honorable discharge and admission to West Point, but in this coveted academy he neglected his duties and courted the dismissal which came to him within six months. Thus, in one editorial position after another he met his duties well and brilliantly until he came to the inevitable breaking point with his less talented employers. And thus, finally, in the succession of love affairs which preceded and followed his married life the violence of his feelings made him wild and freakish. Again and again, just at the times when he most needed full control of himself, he became intoxicated. Yet, though drinking often got him into trouble and may have been the direct cause of his death, he was not a habitual drinker, and in the long intervals between his lapses he doubtless deserved from many another the famous testimony of Nathaniel Parker Willis, his one-time employer:

With the highest admiration for his genius, and a willingness to let it atone for more than ordinary irregularity, we were led by common report to expect a very capricious attention to his duties, and occasionally a scene of violence and difficulty. Time went on, however, and he was invariably punctual and industrious. With his pale, beautiful and intellectual face, as a reminder of what genius was in him, it was impossible, of course, not to treat him with deferential courtesy, and, to our occasional request that he would not probe too deep in a criticism, or that he would erase a

passage colored too highly with his resentments against society and mankind, he readily and courteously assented—far more yielding than most men, we thought, on points so excusably sensitive.

Willis, however, was more considerate and far more understanding than others, giving Poe no new ground for the "resentments against society and mankind" which he cherished against all too many with whom he had differed. On the whole, he was a victim not of friends or foes or "circumstances over which he had no control" but of his own erratic temperament. He was like Byron and Shelley in his youthful enjoyment of privilege and good fortune, in his violent rejection of conventional ease and comfort, in his unhappy life and his early death. One cannot imagine any conditions that would in the end have served Poe better. He was one of the very few who have been truly burdened with "the eccentricities of genius."

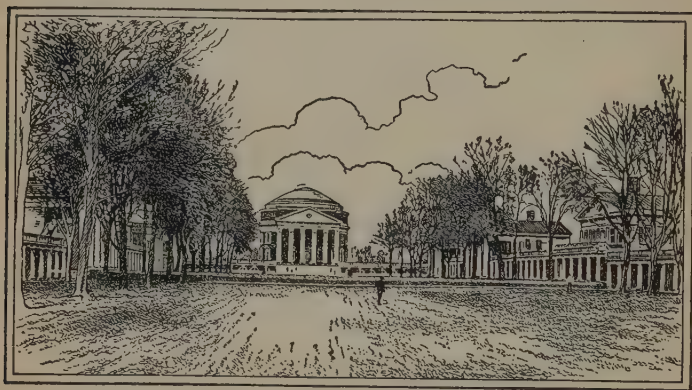
**Early poetry and tales.** The first milestone in his literary career was in 1827. Mr. Allan's refusal to honor his gambling debts resulted in withdrawal from the university and the first clear-cut break with his patron. Shortly after appeared "Tamerlane and Other Poems. By a Bostonian. . . . 1827." It was a little book in which the passion and the pathos of his whole life was foreshadowed in the early couplet

Know thou the secret of a spirit  
Bowed from its wild pride into shame.

"Tamerlane," the title poem, was a boyish and rambling effort, but with a kind of fire glowing through in occasional gleams of poetry and flashes of power. Like many other poems in its day it clearly showed Byron's influence. Next came "Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems" in 1829, shortly before his admission to West Point, and the "Poems" of 1831 just after his dismissal, each including most of what had appeared before, with omissions, changes, and some new poems, but no especial promise of growing power.

**Magazine editorships.** Then for a while he settled in Richmond, receiving an allowance from Mr. Allan, with whom he

had now experienced two breaks and two peacemakings. In 1832 five of his prose tales were printed in the Philadelphia *Saturday Courier*. The fruits of his tireless devotion to authorship began to mature in 1833, when he was awarded a hundred-dollar prize for a short story in the Baltimore *Saturday Visitor*, and when the first prize for a poem in the same competition was withheld from him only because of his success with the



THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

"MS. Found in a Bottle." From then on his literary activities were interwoven into the development of American journalism. His poems, tales, and critical articles appeared in no less than forty-seven American periodicals, from dailies to annuals, and he served in the editorial offices of five.

First of these was the *Southern Literary Messenger*, with which he was connected in Richmond, Virginia, from July, 1835, till January, 1837. This monthly had already printed some fifteen poems and stories by Poe, and during his editorship included eleven more; but in that year and a half he discovered and developed his powers as a critic, and these had more to do with advancing his reputation and building up the *Messenger* circulation than his more original verse and prose. Instead of protesting at the old deference to English models,



Poe had the opposite task of fighting the local critics who flattered everything American. In April, 1836, he wrote:

We are becoming boisterous and arrogant, in the pride of a too speedily assumed literary freedom. We throw off with the most presumptuous and unmeaning hauteur *all* deference whatever to foreign opinion . . . we get up a hue and cry about 'the necessity of encouraging native writers of merit—we blindly fancy that we can accomplish this by indiscriminate puffing of good, bad, and indifferent, without taking the trouble to consider that what we choose to denominate encouragement is thus, by its general application, precisely the reverse. In a word, so far from being ashamed of the many disgraceful literary failures to which our own inordinate vanities and misapplied patriotism have lately given birth, and so far from deeply lamenting that these daily puerilities are of home manufacture, we adhere pertinaciously to our original blindly conceived idea, and thus often find ourselves involved in the gross paradox of liking a stupid book the better because, sure enough, its stupidity is American.

Poe's Southern readers doubtless enjoyed this point of view, partly because it was fresh and honest, and partly because in illustrating it he laid low some of the New Yorkers and worried the complacent New Englanders. At all events, the circulation of the *Messenger* rose from seven hundred to five thousand during his editorship.

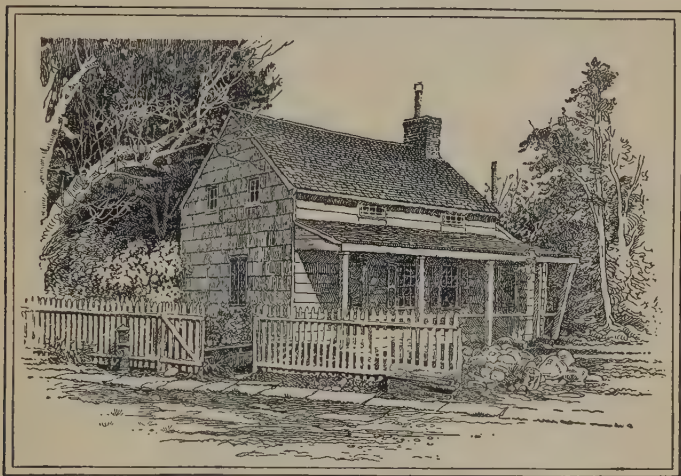
After his break with the proprietor, which came suddenly and unaccountably, there was a lapse of a year and a half before he took up his duties with *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, continuing in a spiritless way for about a year (July, 1839–June, 1840), when, with much bitter feeling, the connection was severed. In the following April *Burton's* was bought out and combined with Graham's feeble monthly, the *Casket*, as *Graham's Magazine*, and Poe gave up his own plan of founding the *Penn Magazine* in order to work with a new employer. In the year that followed he wrote and published several tales and continued his vigorous criticism, while the magazine under good management ran its circulation up from



eight to forty thousand. Then suddenly, in May, 1842, he was a free lance once more, facing this time two years of hardship before he secured another paying job, now with the *Evening Mirror* and the tactful Willis, as a "mechanical paragraphist." The months of quiet routine with this combination daily-weekly were marked by one overshadowing event, the burst of applause with which "The Raven" was greeted. It was the literary sensation of the day, it was supplemented by the chance publication in the same month of a tale by Poe in *Godey's* and a life of Poe in *Graham's*, and it was reprinted in scores of papers. Such general approval, dear to the heart of any artist, seems for the moment to have lifted him out of his usual somber mood. "I send you an early number of the *B. Journal*," he wrote to a friend, "containing my 'Raven.' It was copied by Briggs, my associate, before I joined the paper. The 'Raven' has had a great 'run' . . .—but I wrote it for the express purpose of running—just as I did the 'Gold Bug,' you know. The bird has beat the bug, though, all hollow."

The reference to his new associate records another change of magazines. Poe's position on the *Mirror* had been too humdrum to last long, and with the best of good feelings he changed to an associate editorship of the *Broadway Journal* in February, 1845. With the next October he had realized a long-cherished ambition by obtaining full control; yet before the year was out, for lack of money and of business capacity, his house of cards had fallen and the *Journal* was a thing of the past. One more magazine contribution of major importance remained for him. This was the publication in *Godey's*, from May to October, 1846, of "The Literati," a series of comments on thirty-eight American authors, done in his then well-known critical manner. These were important enough to be reprinted in book form a little later. His story-writing was nearly over ("The Cask of Amontillado" was the only important one of the last half dozen), but of the twelve poems later than the "Raven" four—"Ulalume," "To Helen," "Annabel Lee," and "The Bells"—are among his best-known.

**Later career.** The personal side of Poe's life after his final breach with Mr. Allan, in 1834, is largely clouded by poverty and bitterness and a relaxing grip on his own powers. His marriage to his cousin, Virginia Clemm, in 1836 was completely happy only until the undermining of her health, three years later, and from then on was the cause of a shattering



POE'S COTTAGE AT FORDHAM

succession of hopes and fears ending with her death in 1847. His relations to most other men and women were marred by his erratic, jealous, and too often abusive behavior. Only those friendships lasted which were built on the forbearance of his friends and associates. His nature, which was self-centered and excitable to begin with, became perverted by mishaps of his own making until the characterization of his latest colleague was quite fair. Said C. F. Briggs to James Russell Lowell:

He cannot conceive of anybody's doing anything, except for his own personal advantage; and he says, with perfect sincerity, and entire unconsciousness of the exposition which it makes of his own

mind and heart, that he looks upon all reformers as madmen ; and it is for this reason that he is so great an egoist. . . . Therefore, he attributes all the favor which Longfellow, yourself, or anybody else receives from the world as an evidence of the ignorance of the world, and the lack of that favor in himself he attributes to the world's malignity.

The decline of will power and self-control ended with his tragic death in Baltimore in 1849. The gossip which pursued him all his life has continued relentlessly, even to the point of affecting his biographers,—commonly classified as “malignants” and “amiables,”—but only such facts and reports have been mentioned here as have some real bearing on his habits of mind as an author.

**Poe's theory of poetry.** Poe began as a writer of poems, then wrote tales, and finally added to these his essays in literary criticism. His theory of art, stated in his “Philosophy of Composition” and “Poetic Principle,” is equally well illustrated in his own original writings and in his comments on the writings of others. He accepted the division of the world of mind into Intellect, which deals with Truth ; Taste, which is concerned with Beauty ; and the Moral Sense, which is regardful of Duty. Poetry, he said, should be devoted solely to Beauty: “Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or Truth.”

**His theory of poetry as applied in his critical writings.** For the composition of poetry, thus limited in its province, he developed a fixed formula, by which he measured his several contemporaries. Poems, he said, should be brief ; they should start with the adoption of a novel and vivid effect ; they should be pitched in a tone of sadness ; they should avail themselves of fitting refrains<sup>1</sup> ; they should be presented, in point of setting, within a circumscribed space ; and always they should be scrupulously regardful of conventional poetic rhythms. He

<sup>1</sup>A refrain is a word or phrase repeated at intervals throughout a poem ; for example, “Nevermore” in “The Raven.”

usually followed these rules in his own poems and insisted on them in his criticisms. He was immensely interested in detail effects, and hardly less so in the separate details themselves. In these criticisms he seldom rose to the task of discussing general principles of art, and more seldom still did he discuss any principles of life. Always it was the cameo, the gold filigree, the miniature on ivory under the microscope. If the creative gift is, as Matthew Arnold said, "to see life steadily and to see it whole," Poe seems to have been as far from possessing it as mortal could be.

This is not to say that Poe failed to appreciate, or to write, the kind of poetry that he believed in. It is an estimate of what he thought was worth while rather than an estimate of the excellence of what he wrote. His letter to James Russell Lowell, written in 1844, shows how gray and hopeless his theory of life was: "You speak of 'an estimate of my life,'—and, from what I have already said, you will see that I have none to give. I have been too deeply conscious of the mutability and evanescence of temporal things to give any continuous effort to anything—to be consistent in anything. My life has been *whim*—impulse—passion—a longing for solitude—a scorn of all things present, in an earnest desire for the future."

**His theory of poetry as applied to his poems.** An estimate of his poems can be fairly made only in the light of this thing that he had set out to do. "Ulalume," which meets the formula of the "Philosophy of Composition," is richer in meaning and in self-revelation than any other of Poe's poems. In length and tone and subject and treatment it is composed according to rule. In ninety-four lines of increasing tension the story of the bereaved lover is told. The effect toward which it moves is the shocked moment of discovery that grief for the lost love is not yet "pleasurable," but on this anniversary night is still a source of bitter woe. It is built around a series of disregarded warnings—as the "Cask of Amontillado" is—which are heeded at last when the lover's cry explains the mistrusts

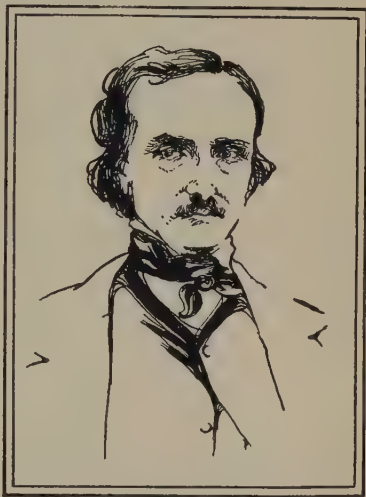
and agonies and scruples of the pacified Psyche. The effect is intensified by use of the whole ominous first stanza in a series of refrains throughout the rest of the ballad. The employment of onomatopœia, or "sound-sense" words, is more subtle and more effective than in "The Bells" or "The Raven"; and the events of the story occur in the usual circumscribed space—in this case a cypress-lined alley which is blocked by the door of the tomb.

These, however, are the mere externals of the poem; the amount of discussion to which it has been subjected shows that, as a poem of any depth should, it contains more than meets the eye. It is a bit of life history, for it refers to Poe's own bereavement, but it is, furthermore, a piece of analysis with a general as well as a personal application. The "I" of the ballad is one half of a divided personality—what, for want of a better term, may be called the masculine side. He is self-confident, blundering, slow to perceive, perfectly brave in his blindness to any cause for fear. Psyche, the soul, is the complementary, or feminine side, in human nature—intuitive, timid, eager for the reassurance that talkative male stupidity can lend her. They are the elements embodied in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the early half of the play, and the story in "Ulalume" is similar to the story of Macbeth up to the time of the murder. Yet,—and here is the defect in Poe,—true as the analysis may be, in Poe's hands it becomes nothing more than an analysis. It is like a very modern stage setting—very somber, very suggestive, very artistic, but so complete an artifice that it could never be mistaken for anything real. It is, in a word, the work of one whose "life has been *whim*—impulse—passion—a longing for solitude—a scorn of all things present."

Poe's briefer songs are simpler, but not unlike the narrative poems. The resemblance is mainly to be found in the careful workmanship, in the adjustment of words to content, and in the heightened dream tone prevailing in them. Poe's technique in some of the best is quite in the manner of the twentieth-



century Imagists (see page 425), and no less effective than in the best of these poets at their best. The earlier of the two poems entitled "To Helen" is quite matchless in its beauty of sound and of suggestion, but it falls before the kind of searching analysis which Poe made of the poems of fellow authors. One has no definite idea of what "those Nicæan barks" may have been nor why the beauty which attracts a wanderer homeward should be likened to a ship which bears him to his native shores. The two fine lines from Byron in the second stanza reverberate splendidly in their new setting, but again they seem to have small likeness to the beauty of Helen. And the last pair of lovely lines are altogether beyond understanding. Read in the dream mood, however, which is utterly unreasonable but utterly uncritical, "To Helen" is as captivating as the sound of a distant melody.



EDGAR ALLAN POE

**His theory of poetry as applied to his emotional tales.** Poe's best tales are of two very different sorts: stories which are the work of a poet, centering around an emotion, like the "Cask of Amontillado"; and stories which are the work of a critic and an expert in cipher codes, built around the unraveling of a mystery, like "The Gold Bug." In some ways the "Cask of Amontillado," a story of cold-blooded vengeance, comes nearer than any other of Poe's tales to completely fulfilling his theory of structure. His essay on the "Philosophy of Composition," which was written about a poem, "The Raven," can be made to apply to this story by substituting each definite reference to the poem with a corresponding one

to the prose tale. The mood of the story is set in the three opening paragraphs—a tone of diabolical hatred. The first setting is selected for its complete contrast to the plan of the villain of the story, for it is put in “the supreme madness of the carnival season” and the victim is actually costumed in cap and bells. In the progress of the story Poe uses a series of repeated expressions or refrains, just as he does in “The Raven” and “Ulalume”: Amontillado, just for the melody of the word; a mocking attention to the health of Fortunato, because he is actually being led to his doom; a reference to the family motto of the Montresors,—“no one injures me with impunity.”—for the threat implied in it; and a punning reference to membership in the Masons, for its suggestion of the way in which Fortunato is to meet his death. The whole story is pursued in a tone of grim mockery and concluded with ironic laughter and the jingling of the fool’s-cap bells. Finally, to free the tale from any least relation to life the assassination does “trammel up the consequence, and catch with his surcease, success”: for there are no after effects. There is not even a suggestion of future remorse.

**Detective stories.** The stories that show the mind of the critic—and the greatest of them come in his later career—are in different fashions riddle-solutions, the most famous being “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,” “The Gold Bug,” and “The Purloined Letter,” pioneers in the field of the detective story. In composing these Poe combined his gift as a story-teller with the powers which he showed equally in deciphering codes, in his essay discrediting Maelzel’s chess-player, in dealing with the complications of “Three Sundays in a Week,” or in foreseeing the outcome of Dickens’s “Barnaby Rudge” from the opening chapter. Still, as in the earlier types, they are composed of the things that life is made of, but they are not really lifelike. It has been well said by a recent critic that the detective story is in a way a concession to the moral sense of the reading public. There has always been a fascination in following the career of the outlaw,

the pirate, or the highwayman. Scores and hundreds of books have been written on this theme, and they are so important as a group that volumes have been written about them and a special name has been given them—the “romance of roguery.” The more fascinating they have been, however, the more dangerous they have been to the morals of youthful readers. But the detective story can give the same thrill and at the same time pursue the wrongdoer to the prison or the gallows, instead of sharing in his defiance of the law. Yet this concession is one in which Poe had no hand. For him detection is an end in itself; he is like the sportsman who is stirred by the zest of the hunt and shoots to kill, but at the day’s end hands over his bag to the gamekeeper with fine disregard. It should be said as a last word in the classification of Poe’s stories that the best work in the sixty-eight can be found in one fourth of that number, that the remainder are in varying degrees overburdened by exposition, and that the least successful, neither well told nor significant, trail off into “sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

**Summary.** As a contemporary figure among his fellow-writers, to summarize, Poe helped upbuild the American magazine, stimulated honest criticism, and wrote a few poems and a few tales of the finest art. At his lowest he is a provider of thrills to people who have not read much, people with just a shade more literary maturity than the habitual *matinée-goer*; and at the other end of the scale he satisfies a class whose literary appetite has been dulled by much reading, who are weary of actual life and real romance, whose minds are furnished like the apartment in “The Assigination,” in which “the evident design has been to dazzle and astound.” At his highest, however, he has exerted an extraordinary influence not only on many who have imitated him too closely but on several prose-writers of distinction who have improved on their model. Wilkie Collins, Conan Doyle, Stevenson, Chesterton, are only the beginning of a list, and in only one language, who have taken up the detective story where Poe laid it down; H. G. Wells and Jules Verne have developed the scientific wonder tales; Bierce,

# SECTION III

DATES	AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS	AMERICAN LITERARY HISTORY
1800-1810	JOHN MARSHALL: <i>Life of Washington</i> , 1804 FRANKLIN: <i>Works</i> , 1806 NOAH WEBSTER: <i>Compendious Dictionary of the English Language</i> , 1806 WASHINGTON IRVING and JAMES K. PAULDING: <i>Salmagundi Papers</i> , January, 1807—January, 1808 "The Hartford Wits" (ALSO, DWIGHT, HOPKINS, TRUMBULL, etc.): <i>The Echo</i> , 1808. WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT: <i>The Embargo</i> , 1808 IRVING: <i>History of New York</i> , 1809 FRENEAU: <i>Poems</i> , 1809	Ralph Waldo Emerson born, 1803 Irving went abroad for first time, 1804 Hawthorne born, 1804 William Gilmore Simms born, 1806 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow born, 1807 Cooper a midshipman in United States Navy, 1808-1811 John Greenleaf Whittier born, 1807 Thomas Paine died, 1809 Oliver Wendell Holmes, Abraham Lincoln, and Edgar Allan Poe born, 1809
1810-1820	New York Historical Society: <i>Collections</i> , Vol. I, 1811 F. S. KEY: <i>Star-Spangled Banner</i> . Written and sung, 1814 FRENEAU: <i>Poems on American Affairs</i> , 1815 BRYANT: <i>Thanatopsis</i> , 1817 FRANKLIN: <i>Works</i> . Edited by Temple Franklin, incomplete, 1817 IRVING: <i>The Sketch Book</i> , 1819	Theodore Parker, Transcendentalist, born, 1810 Margaret Fuller (Ossoli) born, 1810 Harriet Beecher (Stowe) born, 1811 Crèvecoeur died in France, 1813 Irving went abroad for seventeen years, 1815-1832 Henry David Thoreau born, 1817 James Russell Lowell born, 1819 Walt Whitman born, 1819
1820-1830	JAMES FENIMORE COOPER: <i>Precaution</i> , 1820 TRUMBULL: <i>Complete Poems with Memoir by Himself</i> , 1820 BRYANT: <i>The Ages</i> , 1821 COOPER: <i>The Spy</i> , 1821 IRVING: <i>Bracebridge Hall</i> , 1822 COOPER: <i>The Pilot</i> ; <i>The Pioneers</i> , 1823 IRVING: <i>Tales of a Traveller</i> , 1824 COOPER: <i>Lionel Lincoln</i> , 1825; <i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> , 1826; <i>The Prairie</i> , 1827 EDGAR ALLAN POE: <i>Tamerlane and Other Poems</i> , 1827 IRVING: <i>Christopher Columbus</i> , 1828 POE: <i>Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems</i> , 1829	Ulysses S. Grant born, 1822 Cooper went abroad for six and one-half years, 1826 Thomas Jefferson died, 1826 Longfellow in Europe, 1826-1829 Bryant became assistant editor of the <i>New York Evening Post</i> , 1826; editor, 1829 Henry Timrod born, 1829
1830-1840	HENRY W. LONGFELLOW: <i>Elements of French Grammar</i> (translated), 1830 POE: <i>Poems</i> , 1831 COOPER: <i>The Bravo</i> , 1831; <i>The Heidenmauer</i> , 1832; <i>The Headsman</i> , 1833 IRVING: <i>The Alhambra</i> , 1832 LONGFELLOW: <i>Outre-Mer</i> , 1833 BRYANT: <i>Poems</i> , 1836 RALPH WALDO EMERSON: <i>Nature</i> , 1836; <i>The American Scholar</i> , 1837 NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: <i>Twice-Told Tales</i> , 1837 [1838] EMERSON: <i>The Divinity School Address</i> , 1838 COOPER: <i>Homeward Bound; Home as Found</i> , 1838 JOHN G. WHITTIER: <i>Ballads and Anti-Slavery Poems</i> , 1838 [Night, 1839] LONGFELLOW: <i>Hyperion; Voices of the</i>	Paul Hamilton Hayne born, 1830 Trumbull died, 1831 Freneau died, 1832 Emerson resigned from Boston pastorate, 1832; moved to Concord, 1834 Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain) born, 1835 Poe, editor of the <i>Southern Literary Messenger</i> , July, 1835-January, 1837 Longfellow, Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard, 1836-1854 William Dean Howells born, 1837

# SECTION III

ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LITERATURE	HISTORICAL EVENTS
<p>Macaulay born, 1800  Victor Hugo born, 1802  Coleridge: Christabel, 1806  Scott: Ballads and Lyrical Pieces, 1806  Wordsworth: Poems, 1807  Scott: Marmion, 1808  Elizabeth Barrett (Browning), Charles Darwin, William E. Gladstone, and Alfred Tennyson born, 1809</p>	<p>Thomas Jefferson, president, 1801-1809  Union of Great Britain and Ireland, 1801  Purchase of Louisiana from France, 1803  Lewis and Clark's expedition to the Northwest, 1803  Napoleon became "Emperor of the French," 1804  Battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz, 1805  Battle of Jena, 1806  Dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, 1806  Abolition of serfdom in Prussia, 1807  Congress prohibited importation of slaves, 1807  Great Britain abolished slave trade, 1807  Fulton's steamboat on the Hudson, 1807  James Madison, president, 1809-1817  Metternich, prime minister of Austria, succeeded Napoleon as dominant statesman of Europe, 1809</p>
<p>Scott: Lady of the Lake, 1810  Thackeray born, 1811  Browning and Dickens born, 1812  Byron: Childe Harold, 1812-1818  Jane Austen: Pride and Prejudice, 1813  Shelley: Queen Mab, 1813  Robert Southey, poet laureate, 1813-1843  Scott: Waverly, 1814  Wordsworth: The Excursion, 1814  Keats: Endymion, 1818  Turgenev born, 1818  George Eliot and John Ruskin born, 1819  Wordsworth: Peter Bell, 1819</p>	<p>WAR OF 1812 (with England), 1812-1814  Sweden abolished slave traffic, 1813  Napoleon defeated at battle of Leipzig, 1813; Banished to Elba, 1814  Holland abolished slave traffic, 1814  Treaty of peace with England, December 1814  Napoleon returned to France, fought battle of Waterloo, and was banished to St. Helena, 1815  Congress of Vienna: redivision of Europe after Napoleon's conquests, 1815  Stephenson's first locomotive, 1815  James Monroe, president, 1817-1825  Florida acquired from Spain, 1819  Steamers began to cross the Atlantic, 1819  Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, Mississippi, Illinois, and Alabama admitted to the Union, between 1800 and 1820</p>
<p>Keats: Hyperion; Eve of St. Agnes, 1820  Scott: Ivanhoe, 1820  Shelley: Prometheus Unbound, 1820  Keats died, 1821  De Quincey: Confessions of an Opium-Eater, 1821  Lamb: Essays of Elia, 1822, 1833  Shelley died, 1822  Byron died, 1824  Disraeli: Vivian Grey, 1826  Tolstoi and Dostoevski born, 1828</p>	<p>The Missouri Compromise, 1820  George IV, king of England, 1820-1830  Mexican independence, 1821  Napoleon died at St. Helena, April 5, 1821  Monroe Doctrine formulated in presidential message, 1823  John Quincy Adams, president, 1825-1829  University of Virginia (founded by Thomas Jefferson), opened, 1825  The kingdom of Greece founded, 1827  Two political parties in the United States: National Republicans and Democratic Republicans (or "Democrats"), 1828  Andrew Jackson, president, 1829-1837</p>
<p>Scott and Goethe died, 1832  Carlyle: Sartor Resartus, 1833-1834  Balzac: Eugénie Grandet, 1833  Coleridge and Lamb died, 1834  Bulwer Lytton: Last Days of Pompeii, 1834  Browning: Paracelsus, 1835  Wordsworth: Yarrow Revisited, 1835  Dickens: Pickwick Papers (published serially, 1836-1837).  Carlyle: The French Revolution, 1837  Dickens: Oliver Twist, 1838; Nicholas Nickleby, 1839</p>	<p>Population of free states 1,150,000 above that of slave states, 1830  First steam railroad in United States, 1830  The United States had 852 newspapers, 1830  William IV, king of England, 1830-1837  Revolution in France (king overthrown by liberals), 1830  Belgium became an independent state, 1830  The American Antislavery Society formed, 1831  Abolition of slavery throughout British Empire, 1833  First railway line built in Germany, 1835  Texas won independence from Mexico, 1836  Martin Van Buren, president, 1837-1841  Victoria, queen of England, 1837-1901  Maine, Missouri, Arkansas, and Michigan, admitted to the Union, between 1820 and 1840</p>



Stevenson, Kipling, Hardy, have written stories of horror and fantasy; and the touch of his art is suggested by many who have absorbed something from it without becoming disciples or imitators of it or refiners upon it.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Of the periodicals mentioned in the Chart on page 449, how many survive that were established before Poe died? that were established before the Civil War?

2. How do you account for the fact that Poe's stories draw no material from his routine experiences as student, soldier, or editor?

3. Read "William Wilson." Is there any ground for comparison and contrast between this and Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" in the treatment of the good and evil elements in a single character?

4. What effect does the use of the first person in Poe's stories exert on the reader's attention? Is there any correspondence between the "I" in Poe's work and the "I" in Whitman's? (See pages 340-341.)

5. Read the "Purloined Letter," and compare it as a detective story with Conan Doyle's "Scandal in Bohemia."

6. Are any of Poe's detective stories told with reference to bringing the offender to justice?

7. Are any of Poe's stories told with reference to the moral strength or weakness of the characters in them?

8. Story-tellers may use the happenings in their stories for any one of three general purposes: for the interest of the happenings themselves; for their direct effect on the emotions of the characters and of the readers; and for their effect on the characters in later life. Is it safe to say that Cooper used his events for one of these purposes, Hawthorne for another, and Poe for a third? How would you assign them?

9. The Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters XII and XX will be found useful in answering the following questions:

a. What was Poe's first publication? In what year? What book of the Leatherstocking series appeared in this year?

b. In what year was Poe born? What other Americans were born the same year? What Englishmen?

c. Between the ten years from 1840 to 1850 name three historical or scientific events that you regard as important to our present-day life.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SIGNS OF THE TIMES IN NEW ENGLAND

No reading list is supplied with this chapter, as no special reading for it could profitably be done in a school course. It is presented as a historical link between the chapters on the literature, and should be studied as such.

#### CHAPTER OUTLINE

New York's loss of the literary leadership

The New England group

Contrast between the men of Concord and the New Yorkers

Concord as a community

The Transcendentalists

Their belief

Two undertakings of the Transcendentalists

*The Dial*

Brook Farm

The scholars

The historians

The orators

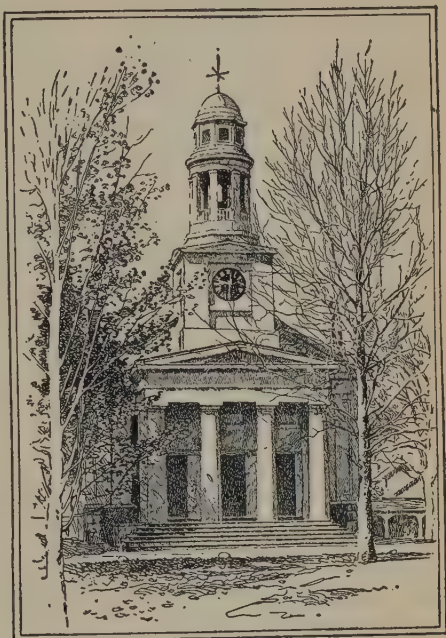
**New York's loss of the literary leadership.** With the passing of Irving and Cooper, the leadership in American letters was lost to New York. Indeed, by 1850, before the death of either, four men in eastern Massachusetts were in full career—Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, and Whittier; and before the death of Irving, in 1859, Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Holmes came into their full powers. The New Yorkers had done a very distinguished work. The two prose writers in particular had shown talents of which their countrymen could be proud, and had introduced the New World to the Old. Yet, though their fame was destined to live, their influence on other authors was bound to die with them because they both were looking backward. The roots of these men were struck deep in the

eighteenth century. Cooper's strength lay in his ability to write stories of the romantic past. Even when he brought them up to date, as in "The Pioneers" and "The Prairie," he presented the decline of a passing type of American life. When he wrote of the present pointing to the future, as in "Homeward Bound" and "Home as Found," he was filled with distress and alarm. He was bred in the traditions of aristocracy; he believed in the theories of democracy, but he was very much afraid that they would not turn out well in practice. Irving was a gentleman of the old school. He was loyal to the ideals of his country and confident of its future, but he was fascinated by the traditions of England and Europe. When he wrote of the weaknesses of his city and his fellow citizens, he cast his gentle satires into the form made popular by two Englishmen of a bygone day, and limited himself, as they had done, to commenting on customs, manners, recreations—the external habits of daily life. Bryant, in contrast, was a more modern man. His later life (in which he survived Irving and Cooper by two decades) was finely admirable; but, though his thinking was wise and just, he influenced men less as a thinker than as a stalwart citizen. The New Yorkers, in a word, all wrote as men who were educated in the world of action; they were almost untouched by the deeper currents of human thought which in the nineteenth century were to make great changes in the world.

**The New England group.** By 1821, when the "Sketch Book" and "The Spy" and "Thanatopsis" had all appeared, there was growing up in the quieter surroundings of Boston a generation of New England boys with a different sort of training. They all went to and through college, most of them to Harvard, and after college they set to reading philosophy. Many of them came from a long line of Puritan ancestry, as Bryant did. Unlike Bryant, several of them felt a distrust and dislike for the sternness of the old creeds. Yet they had the strength of Puritan character in them and the born habit of thinking deeply on the things that are not seen and eternal. What was new in

them was that they were prepared to think independently and to come to their own conclusions. The reading of these boys was no longer chiefly in Pope, Addison, and Goldsmith. It was in the great English writers who were just arriving at fame—Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle—or in the French and German philosophers.

**Contrast between the men of Concord and the New Yorkers.** In the Concord group—Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne—the contrast with the New Yorkers is particularly striking. They were anything but men of the world. When they began to write they stayed in the seclusion of little villages and waited patiently. They matured slowly. Emerson was past middle life before America heeded him; Hawthorne was



OLD CHURCH, CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

forty-six at the time of his first marked success; Thoreau's fame did not come till after his death. They were not "team-workers." Emerson was a clergyman for a short while, but retired in the very year when Bryant began his long service with the *Evening Post*; Hawthorne was a recluse for fourteen years after college and then held positions reluctantly for only half of his remaining life; Thoreau never put on the harness. They were not swept into the current of city life,—“warped out of their own orbits,”—but, instead, they made Concord,

whose "chief product" was literature, more famous than any center of shipping or banking or manufacture.

**Concord as a community.** "Concord is a little town," Emerson wrote in his *Journal*, "and yet has its honors. We get our handful of every ton that comes to the city." In his address at the two hundredth anniversary in 1835 he dwelt on his pride in its history and character. He traced the earliest settlement, the dividing up of the land, the events leading up to the Revolution, and, in the presence of some of the aged survivors, the firing by the embattled farmers of "the shot heard round the world" in 1775. The institution in Concord that most appealed to him was the town meeting, where the whole body of voters met to transact the public business. The meetings of those two hundred years had witnessed much that was petty, but on the whole they had made for good.

It is the consequence of this institution that not a school-house, a public pew, a bridge, a pound, a mill-dam hath been set up, or pulled down, or altered, or bought, or sold, without the whole population of this town having a voice in the affair. A general contentment is the result. And the people truly feel that they are lords of the soil. In every winding road, in every stone fence, in the smokes of the poor-house chimney, in the clock on the church, they read their own power, and consider at leisure the wisdom and error of their judgments.

Emerson noted that the English government had recently given to certain American libraries copies of a splendid edition of the "Domesday Book" and other ancient public records of England. A suitable return gift, he thought, would be the printed records of Concord, not simply because Concord was Concord, but because Concord was America. "Tell them the Union has twenty-four states, and Massachusetts is one. Tell them that Massachusetts has three hundred towns, and Concord is one; that in Concord are five hundred rateable polls [that is, taxable voters] and every one has an equal vote." In closing his address Emerson gave his reason for choosing,



when thirty-one years old, to come back to "the fields of his fathers" and spend his life there.

I believe this town to have been the dwelling place at all times since its planting of pious and excellent persons, who walked meekly through the paths of common life, who served God, and loved man, and never let go the hope of immortality. The benediction of their prayers, and of their principles lingers around us.

In the Journal he carries this general indorsement down to particulars that would have been out of place in a public memorial address.

Perhaps in the village we have manners to paint which the city life does not know. Here we have Mr. S., who is man enough to turn away the butcher, who cheats in weight, and introduces another into town. The other neighbors couldn't take such a step. . . . There is the hero who will not subscribe to the flag-staff, or the engine, though all say it is mean. There is the man who gives his dollar, but refuses to give his name, though all other contributors are set down. There is Mr. H., who never loses his spirits, though always in the minority. . . . Here is Mr. C., who says "honor bright," and keeps it so. Here is Mr. S., who warmly assents to whatever proposition you please to make, and Mr. M., who roundly tells you he will have nothing to do with the thing. Here, too, are not to be forgotten our two companies, the Light Infantry and the Artillery, who brought up one the Brigade Band and one the Brass Band from Boston, set the musicians side by side under the great tree on the Common, and let them play two tunes and jangle and drown each other, and presently got the companies into active hustling and kicking.

Thus Concord was a little community with a noble and dignified past and at the same time with the homely virtues, oddities, and weaknesses of a New England village. In these respects it was a fit dwelling place for the men who made it famous, for they were like the town in being both finely idealistic and very human. The contrast with the New York of these same years is a vivid one.

**The Transcendentalists—their belief.** Centering about Concord, but by no means located within it, was a "Transcendental movement," of which Emerson is considered the chief exponent. When the proper nouns "Transcendentalist" and "Transcendentalism" are used, they are made to refer to this movement in eastern Massachusetts. Although the words are used in the local sense, however, they really stand for a kind of thinking that was gaining ground in Germany and France and England and America. For two or three hundred years the leading philosophers had been developing further and further the idea that men could be certain only of the few things that could be seen, heard, touched, smelled, tasted. This struck at the foundation of all belief in God, abstract justice, the future life, and other related ideas. But such beliefs are inborn in all men. So the time came, toward the year 1800, when even the formal philosophers, recognizing this fact, came to the point of saying that certain basic truths were beyond doubt even though they could not actually be proved. These truths "transcended" human experience. They were true like axioms in mathematics, and they were at the basis of Transcendentalism.

This stood in complete contrast with the faith of the Puritans, and yet in strong resemblance to it. Like the Calvinists, the Transcendentalists argued from a set of assumptions rather than a set of facts; but, unlike the Calvinists, the Transcendentalists drew these assumptions from their own inner conviction instead of from a set of precepts which had been distorted out of the Scriptures. They believed in God, and they found his clearest expression in the spirit of man and in the natural surroundings in which God had placed him. They believed that in each man was a spark of divinity. They were assailed because they did not acknowledge an utter difference between Jesus Christ and the average man, though their sin lay not in degrading Christ to the level of man, but in exalting man to the level of Christ. They insisted that it was the duty of each individual to develop the best

that was in him on earth, thinking more of the life here than of the life hereafter. They were inspired by the love of God rather than threatened by his wrath, and so they "substituted for a dogmatic dread an illimitable hope."

Fortunately for the influence of this group, they inherited the sound qualities of Puritan character. They thereafter did not lay themselves open to attack on account of any wild breaches of conduct. Emerson was a saint, Thoreau a man of snow-white virtue, Bronson Alcott a pure philosopher, Theodore Parker a great preacher and reformer, Margaret Fuller a high-minded woman of letters, and the scores of their associates just as devoted to a high religious ideal as any equal number of the early Pilgrims.

**Two undertakings of the Transcendentalists—the *Dial*.** The Transcendentalists are chiefly remembered for two group projects. The first of these was the *Dial*, a quarterly publication which ran for sixteen numbers, 1840-1844. The so-called Transcendental Club, an informal group of kindred spirits, came toward the end of the thirties to the point where they felt the need of an "organ" of their own. After much discussion they undertook the publication of this journal of one hundred and twenty-eight pages to an issue. For the first two years it was under the editorship of Margaret Fuller. When her health failed under this extra unpaid task, Emerson, with the help of Thoreau, took charge for the remaining two years. Its circulation was very small, never reaching two hundred and fifty, and when finally it had to be discontinued, Emerson personally paid the last bills. It contained chiefly essays of a philosophical nature, but included in every issue a rather rare body of verse. The essays mirrored and discussed German thought and literature and dealt with problems of art, literature, and philosophy. The section given to critical reviews is extremely interesting for its quick response to new writers who have since become famous. The *Dial* is in a way the literary journal or diary of the Transcendental movement in America from 1840 to 1844.

**Brook Farm.** The other undertaking associated with the Transcendentalists is less formally their own venture. This was the Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education in West Roxbury, nine miles out from Boston. It was financially the undertaking of a small group of stockholders of whom the Reverend George Ripley was the chief and Nathaniel Hawthorne the man of widest later fame. It was an attempt at the start to combine "plain living and high



BROOK FARM

thinking," the theory being that the group could do their own household and farm work and pursue their own intellectual life. During the first three years, from 1841 to 1844, it was carried on as a quiet assembling of idealists who were withdrawing slightly from the hubbub of the world. Farming was supplemented by several other simple industries, a school was successfully maintained, and the people who lived there were visited with interest by many who looked on in sympathetic amusement. The number of actual residents never exceeded one hundred and fifty. Of the leading Transcendentalists, Margaret Fuller was the only one to spend much time there. Parker was occupied with his multitudinous duties in Boston; Thoreau tried his experiment by living alone at Walden; Alcott was at his short-lived and ill-fated vegetarian com-

munity of Fruitlands; and Emerson stayed in Concord with the comment: "I do not wish to remove from my present prison to a prison a little larger. . . . I have not yet conquered my own house. It irks and repents me. Shall I raise the siege of this hen coop, and march baffled away to a pretended siege of Babylon?" In the latter half of its life Brook Farm was drawn into the communistic movement which the French philosopher Charles Fourier had elaborated, and was made the first "phalanx" in America. With this movement its whole nature changed, as it became a part of a great social plan to transform the world. An ambitious central building was erected in 1846, and by an irony of fate the uninsured "phalanstery" was burned down at the very moment when its completion was being celebrated. This last financial burden broke the back of the enterprise, which was discontinued in 1847. It is significant of Brook Farm that however unqualified a business failure it was, it served as a gathering spot for a group of idealists who never ceased to recall their life on the Farm as a happy and fruitful experience.

It would be quite wrong to suggest that the only signs of alertness of mind in New England from 1835 to 1860 were to be found in the amateur philosophers of Concord and its neighborhood—the Transcendentalists. Three other types of thinking men were proving that the mind of the day was awake and active—the scholars, the historians, and the orators.

**The scholars.** As early as 1815, when Emerson was a boy of twelve, two young Bostonians, George Ticknor (1791-1871) and Edward Everett (1794-1865), headed the stream of American students which has been flowing to Europe ever since. When graduates of American colleges go to English, French, and German universities now, they gain valuable experience for themselves in the way of first-hand knowledge of foreign lands, contact with famous scholars, and access to rare books and documents; but they bring back nothing new in the way of methods of study, for the greater universities in the United States can compare with the greater universities



abroad. But a hundred years ago there was almost as much difference between Harvard College and the Old World universities as there is today between a well-developed high school, with its junior college, and the present Harvard University. So men like Ticknor and Everett came back with a fresh eagerness for learning, others followed in the paths



THE OLD CORNER BOOKSTORE, BOSTON

they had opened, and for the first time America joined hands with Europe in "adding to the sum of human knowledge." The college teacher, who will always be indispensable, was supplemented by the university scholar, whose chief work is in the library and the laboratory rather than in the classroom.

**The historians.** Much of the early work by American scholars was in the field of history. Ticknor himself wrote the first extensive history of Spanish literature that was available for English readers. But a more representative man, more nearly a pioneer American historian—as Ticknor was a pioneer scholar—was Jared Sparks (1789–1866), editor of a whole library of American biography, of the correspondence of the American Revolution, and of the complete works of Franklin and Washington. His habits of depending only on the original documents, and not on hearsay or the repeated errors of careless writers, was followed by the distinguished historians who succeeded him: George Bancroft (1800–1891), William Hickling Prescott (1796–1859), Francis Parkman (1823–1893), and John Lothrop Motley (1814–1877). The

first three of these all made massive contributions to the history of the New World, and the last did his special work on the history of the Netherlands.

**The orators.** Naturally, what the orators had to say was more popular than what the scholars and the historians wrote; for it is in the very nature of oratory that it must appeal to the crowd. A great author may be long neglected, but the measure of an orator, like that of an actor or a musician, is found in his audiences. The greatest platform favorite during the first half of the nineteenth century was Daniel Webster (1782-1852). In the years when Ticknor and Everett were students abroad Webster was Member of Congress from New Hampshire, and for the third of a century before his death he was always in the public eye. He came to his prime when the "grand style" was still popular on the rostrum, as it was on the stage. In appearance he was of such impressive dignity as to give rise to the comment that nobody could ever be as great as Daniel Webster always looked. So he swayed his audiences through their eyes and ears rather than through their minds. A careful reading of his life and his utterances does not reveal any deep and abiding principles to which he was devoted. Whether the judgment was fair or not, people had so far lost confidence in him by 1850 that his speech on the 7th of March of that year was generally regarded as an attempt to gain the presidential nomination rather than as an attempt to save the Union. If he were living today, he might again stir the multitudes by his voice and presence, but lacking these, few readers are deeply impressed by his words as they stand in print. The same thing is true of Edward Everett, whose two-hour oration at the dedication of Gettysburg Cemetery is now utterly paled in the light of Lincoln's few simple words. The fiery outcries of Theodore Parker, Charles Sumner, and Wendell Phillips, who were fighting slavery without a care for their own fortunes, have more real life in them; but even their orations seem today to belong to history more than to literature.

Yet the orators and the historians and the scholars were witnesses, each in his own fashion, to the fact that New England was on its way through stirring times as the years drew along toward the middle of the nineteenth century.

*Answers* 2  
SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Explain the statement made in the first paragraph of the text that the roots of Irving, Cooper, and Bryant "were struck deep in the eighteenth century."
2. What differences appear between the New Yorkers of Irving's generation and the New Englanders of Emerson's in (1) education, (2) interest in English writers, and (3) connection with the world of affairs?
3. In what respects was Concord, Massachusetts, a typical New England town?
4. In what main points of belief did the Transcendentalists differ from their Puritan forefathers?
5. How many numbers of the *Dial* appeared? Over how long a period? How large a circulation did it have? How was it related to the Transcendental movement?
6. What was Brook Farm? How long was it maintained? Was it a business success? Was it a total failure? Who lived there? Who among the Transcendental group did not live there?
7. What prominent American poets, mentioned in the text, were contemporaries of the Transcendental group but not members of it?
8. Describe the life at Brook Farm as far as an idea of it is suggested to you from the text and the illustration.

## CHAPTER XIV

### RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

RALPH WALDO EMERSON. *Prose*: "The American Scholar" (the duties of the scholar); "Self-Reliance" (paragraphs 3-5, 11-13); "Friendship" (paragraphs 12, 13); "Society and Solitude" (entire). *Poetry*: "Good-Bye," "Written in Rome," "The Rhodora," "The Apology," "Concord Hymn," "Woodnotes" (Part I), "Compensation," "Friendship."

Also passages occurring in such collections as the following:

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 211-234. Ginn and Company.

BOYNTON, P. H. *American Poetry*, pp. 195-223. Charles Scribner's Sons.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 316-352. Ginn and Company.

FOERSTER, NORMAN. *Chief American Prose Writers*, pp. 301-434. Houghton Mifflin Company.

PAGE, C. H. *Chief American Poets*, pp. 58-101. Houghton Mifflin Company.

STEDMAN, E. C. *An American Anthology*, pp. 90-101. Houghton Mifflin Company.

What does Emerson say is the chief duty of the scholar, and why?

What is the distinction between a scientist and an inventor, and which of the two is the scholar? *Scientist*

To which does the world give the more freedom of thought and speech, the student of natural or of social science? Why? *natural*

What grounds for self-reliance does Emerson find in childhood and youth? What obstacles to it in manhood?

What are, to Emerson, the main elements in friendship?

What is the general point of the first half of the essay on "Society and Solitude"? What is the point of the second half?

Select some of the most brief and striking sentences from his essays.

How far do you find the same ideas in Emerson's poetry that you find in his prose?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

**The early life of Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Boyhood

Life in college

Years as a clergyman

First travels abroad

**Emerson's essays on independence, of 1836, 1837, and 1838**

The nature of his lawlessness: "Self-Reliance"

His belief in the individual: "Friendship"

His inconsistency and his balance: "Compensation"

His alliance of independence and sympathy: "Society and Solitude"

**Emerson as a lecturer**

Looseness of general structure

Clearness of sentences and diction

**Emerson's poetry**

Ruggedness of form

Resemblance to his prose

**Emerson's character**

His independence and his judgment

His optimism and its critics

**Emerson and the present**

**The early life of Ralph Waldo Emerson.** Ralph Waldo Emerson was born in Boston in 1803. He came from old Puritan stock, several of his direct ancestors being clergymen. He was one of eight children, of whom six were living when his father, the Reverend William Emerson, died in 1811. Mr. Emerson had been so beloved by his parishioners that after his death they continued to pay his salary for seven years, and for three years gave the use of the parish house to the family. The nature of these years is presented in his son's essay on "Domestic Life":

Who has not seen, and who can see unmoved, under a low roof, the eager, blushing boys discharging as they can their household chores, and hastening into the sitting-room to the study of to-morrow's merciless lesson, yet stealing time to read one chapter more of the novel hardly smuggled into the tolerance of father and mother—atoning for the same by some passages of Plutarch or



Goldsmith; the warm sympathy with which they kindle each other in school-yard, or barn, or wood-shed, with scraps of poetry or song, with phrases of the last oration or mimicry of the orator; the youthful criticism, on Sunday, of the sermons; the school declamation, faithfully rehearsed at home. . . . Ah, short-sighted students of books, of nature, and of man, too happy could they know their advantages, they pine for freedom from that mild parental yoke; they sigh for fine clothes, for rides, for the theater, and premature freedom and dissipation which others possess. Woe to them if their wishes were crowned. The angels that dwell with them, and are weaving laurels of life for their youthful brows, are Toil, and Want, and Truth, and Mutual Faith.

**Boyhood.** There was a great deal of work for the young Emersons in the day, but the spirit of play and playfulness survived it all, as this bit of verse shows. It was written by Ralph to his brother Edward.

So erst two brethren climb'd the cloud-capp'd hill,  
Ill-fated Jack, and long-lamented Jill,  
Snatched from the crystal font its lucid store,  
And in full pails the precious treasure bore.  
But ah, by dull forgetfulness oppress'd  
(Forgive me, Edward) I've forgot the rest.

**Life in college.** In due time Emerson went to Harvard, entering the class of 1821. Here he earned part of his expenses and was helped by scholarships, which must have been given him more on account of his character than because of his actual performance as a student, for he stood only in the middle of his class. He was almost hopelessly weak in mathematics, but he won three prizes in essay-writing and elocution. He was a regular member of one of the debating societies, which were the chief social clubs in the colleges of his day. His appointment as class poet at graduation was no special distinction, for it was conferred on him after seven others had refused it. All the while, however, his mind had been active, and he came out from college with the fruits of a great amount of good reading which had doubtless somewhat distracted him from the assigned work.

Emerson's experience at college should not be confused with that of many budding geniuses who showed their originality by mere laziness and misbehavior. Emerson, like Hawthorne and Thoreau too, showed his independence simply by choosing the things at which he should do his hardest work.



RALPH WALDO EMERSON

An early portrait

He was full of ambition.

An entry in his Journal of 1822 proves that at this age he was more like the Puritan Milton than the care-free Cooper: "In twelve days I shall be nineteen years old, which I count a miserable thing. Has any other educated person lived so many years and lost so many days?"

He blamed himself for dreaming of greatness and doing little to achieve it, but he decided not yet to give up hope of belonging to the "family of giant minds."

Already, too, he was in thought joining his own future with the future of the

country in such jottings as these: "Let those who would pluck the lot of immortality from Fate's urn, look well to the future of America." "To America, therefore, monarchs look with apprehension and the people with hope." If his countrymen could boast no great accomplishment in the arts, "We have a government and a national spirit that is better than persons or histories." The judges of what he was going to write were to be a nation of free minds, "for in America we have plucked down Fortune and set up Nature in his room." These comments sound like old-fashioned school commencement orations, for they were all written before he was twenty-two. In later years

he wrote more simply and less excitedly, but he never forgot that his own life was always part of the life of the nation.

**Years as a clergyman.** The five years just after graduation were not encouraging. He taught in his brother's school for a while, but loathed the task because he taught so badly. Ill health harassed him. While he was studying in the Divinity School his eyes failed him, so that he was excused from the regular examinations at the end; and a month after he was admitted to the ministry his doctor advised him to spend the winter in the South. It was not until 1829, when he was twenty-six years old, that he was settled in a pastorate. Then the future seemed assured for him. The church was an old and respected one, the congregation made up of "desirable" people. If the young preacher was able to prepare acceptable sermons and make friends among his parishioners, he could be sure of a permanent and dignified position in Boston. But although the flock were perfectly satisfied with their shepherd, in three years he resigned. He had found that certain of the forms of church worship embarrassed him because he could not always enter into the spirit of them. Sometimes when the moment for the "long prayer" came, he did not feel moved to utter it, and he felt that to "deliver" it as a piece of elocution was dishonest and irreverent. Administering the holy communion troubled him still more, because he felt afraid that to the literal Yankee mind the taking of the bread and wine was either meaningless or tinged with superstition. So he expressed his honest doubts to his congregation, explaining that if these features of worship were necessary, he could no longer continue to be their pastor, and they reluctantly let him go.

**First travels abroad.** Two years were yet to pass in the preparatory stage of Emerson's life. For the first seven months of 1833 he was abroad, traveling slowly from Italy up to England. In reading his daily comments on what he saw, it is clear that he did not enjoy the novelties of travel as Irving and Cooper did; he seems rather to have gone through with the tour as a sober piece of education. His most vivid experiences

were not in seeing places but in meeting English authors, and with one of these, Thomas Carlyle, he made the beginning of a lifelong friendship. It was like Emerson to be especially attracted to Carlyle, who was almost unknown at the time, to seek him out on his lonely Scotch farm, and to feel a deeper sympathy and admiration for him than for men already famous, like Wordsworth and Coleridge and DeQuincey. No single man and no amount of public opinion ever made up this young American's mind for him. When, after a year of preaching and lecturing in America, he went late in 1834 to settle in Concord, the richest memory he treasured from his travels was the founding of this new companionship. In the long life that remained to him no two threads are more important than those of Concord and Carlyle—the place he loved most, and the greatest of his friends.

These thirty-one years are a piece not only of Emerson's life; they are a piece of American history. They exhibit the life in Boston of a boy and young man with a fine Puritan inheritance. Among all the traits which came down to him from the past none were stronger than his uprightness and his independence. Like the boys of earliest Pilgrim families, he was trained at home in "the uses of adversity," given a careful schooling, and sent to college to be prepared for the ministry. His mind, like that of his ancestors, "derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests"; but, like some of the strongest of these,—like Roger Williams, for example (p. 17),—he was bent on arriving at his own conclusions. Fortunately men were no longer persecuted for their religious beliefs in the old savage ways. When Emerson withdrew from the church, he did not lose the affection of the people whom he had been serving. Though men could still feel bitterly on the subject of religious differences, the new century was more generous than the earlier ones had been. Travel along the Atlantic seaboard and in Europe had enriched this American's knowledge of the world, but deepened his love of his home country; and here as a full-grown man he settled

down with his books, among an increasing number of congenial friends, to think about life and to record what he had thought.

**Emerson's essays on independence, of 1836, 1837, and 1838.**

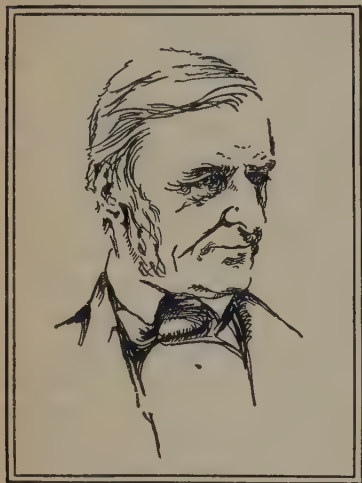
It was, therefore, no accident that in three years—1836, 1837, and 1838—Emerson wrote three essays in summary of his chief ideas on men and things. In them all there was the central thought that life had become too much a matter of unthinking habit, and that people must stop long enough to make up their minds what it was all about. He offered no "system." He pleaded only that people look where they were going, so that if they followed in the footsteps of their fathers, they should not be blind men led by the blind, or if they decided to strike off into new paths, they should do so with their eyes open.

(1) The first was the slender book "Nature," which opened with a challenge that readers look around them, "If the stars should appear but one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown"; and which closed triumphantly with "So shall we come to look at the world with new eyes." (2) The second was "The American Scholar," an address before the honorary scholarship society at Harvard. This stated near the opening that America's "long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands" was drawing to a close, and insisted that the new American scholar must "not quit his belief that a pop-gun is a pop-gun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom." (3) The third, delivered before the graduating class of the Harvard Divinity School the next year, spoke of religion as the earlier ones had spoken of nature and scholarship, urged the young preachers to cast behind them "all conformity," and asked,

What hinders that now, everywhere, in pulpits, in lecture-rooms, in houses, in fields, wherever the invitation of men or your own occasions lead you, you speak the very truth, as your life and conscience teach it, and cheer the waiting, fainting hearts of men with new hope and revelation?



Although the Harvard authorities might have foreseen it, they were shocked when the young lecturer championed independence in religious matters. Two hundred years earlier he would have been banished from Massachusetts for saying less. As it was, however, Harvard closed her lecture rooms to him for nearly thirty years, and the outraged clergy attacked him in speech and in print. Emerson was undisturbed and made no public reply.



RALPH WALDO EMERSON

A later portrait

The nature of his lawlessness: "Self-Reliance." Thus far it is clear that Emerson's message to the world was to startle men out of their thoughtless ways of drifting, into active swimming—with the current if they should think best, but very probably against it. The whole problem was summarized in his single defiant essay on "Self-Reliance,"—defiant because in this protest he was chiefly concerned with telling men what they should *not* do.

They should not pray, not be consistent, not travel, not imitate, not conform to society; but should be Godlike, independent, searching their own hearts, and behaving in accordance with the truth they found there. It is anarchy he was preaching, an elevated lawlessness. And the first reaction to such teaching is to ask with shocked disapproval, "What would happen to the world if all men followed his advice?" There are two very simple answers. The first is that if all men followed Emerson's advice, completely as he gave it, the world would be peopled with saints; for what he asked was that people should disregard only such laws of society as came into conflict with the laws of

God. And the second answer is that such a query sets an impossible condition, for the pressure is so strong, and the habit of doing as others do is so general, that counsel like Emerson's will never be adopted by more than a very small minority.

**His belief in the individual:** "Friendship." Emerson's continual talk about the freedom of the individual was only his way of talking about society, because he believed that the mass of mankind could be ennobled best by persuading each man to be nobler. This explains his lack of active interest in reform movements, for he felt that reforms work upon men from the outside instead of moving them from within. There were so many strange schemes for reform at the time that Emerson naturally thought of many of them as "poor, bitter things in themselves." He was willing to accept the world as it was at the moment, because he hoped and believed it would be a better world when the men and women in it became better. And so it came about that he put his hopes not in organizations—governments, schools, churches—but in "the dear love of comrades." If he wrote in his essay on "Self-Reliance" as if the worst that could come to man was to be overwhelmed by public opinion, he wrote in his essay on "Friendship" that the best that could be given a man was the fellowship of ideal friends.

**His inconsistency and his balance:** "Compensation." One fact to keep in mind in reading all Emerson is that he regularly expresses himself in emphatic terms. In consequence, what he says in one mood he is likely in another to gainsay; and in a third, though without any deliberate intention to defend himself, he may bring the first two into harmony. He simply follows out his own ideas on consistency as he states them in "Compensation":

But why should you keep your head over your shoulder? Why drag about this corpse of your memory, lest you contradict somewhat you have stated in this or that public place? Suppose you should contradict yourself; what then? . . . A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines.

**His alliance of independence and sympathy: "Society and Solitude."** This sort of balancing of his views of independence is to be found in an essay of thirty years later on "Society and Solitude." The first two thirds of this seem to be quite as averse to society as anything in the early declarations. He quotes Newton: "It would perhaps increase my acquaintance, the thing which I chiefly study to decline." He quotes Swedenborg: "There are angels who do not live consociated, but separate, house and house; these dwell in the midst of heaven, because they are the best of angels." He says for himself: "We sit and muse, and are serene and complete; but the moment we meet with anybody, each becomes a fraction." These three statements would suggest that Emerson was all for solitude. Then, however, comes the corrective note: "But this banishment to the rocks and echoes no metaphysics can make right or tolerable. This result is so against nature, such a half view, that it must be corrected by a common sense and experience." In the earlier essays and addresses Emerson had said repeatedly, "Rely on yourself." Now he was adding to this, "Be of use to your fellows." This idea was, of course, always in Emerson's mind, but it was in the later years, after he himself had seen more and more of life, that he expressed it in definite assertions, instead of taking it for granted as something the wise man would assume. The concluding paragraph in this essay not only sums up Emerson's views on society and solitude but illustrates the kind of balance which he often strikes between statements which little minds could erect into hobgoblins of inconsistency:

Here again, as so often, Nature delights to put us between extreme antagonisms, and our safety is in the skill with which we keep the diagonal line. Solitude is impracticable, and society fatal. We must keep our head in the one and our hands in the other. The conditions are met, if we keep our independence, yet do not lose our sympathy. These wonderful horses need to be driven by fine hands. We require such a solitude as shall hold us to its revelations when we are in the street and in palaces; for most men are cowed in society, and say good things to you in

private, but will not stand to them in public. But let us not be the victims of words. Society and solitude are deceptive names. It is not the circumstance of seeing more or fewer people, but the readiness of sympathy that imports; and a sound mind will derive its principles from insight, with ever a purer ascent to the sufficient and absolute right, and will accept society as the natural element in which they are to be applied.

**Emerson as a lecturer.** Throughout the most fruitful years of Emerson's life he lived quietly in Concord, writing without hurry in the mornings, walking and talking with his friends who lived there and with the increasing number of more and less distinguished men who came to visit him. But he gave three winter months of each year to lecturing, delivering frequent series in New York and Boston and going out into the West as far as Wisconsin and Missouri. In these months, as a man of business he earned a fair share of his income, and as a prophet he exerted his widest influence. What he meant to his auditors has been best said by a younger admirer in his brief essay on "Emerson the Lecturer." James Russell Lowell, recalling the days when he was a college student, wrote:

We used to walk in from the country [Cambridge, four miles out from Boston] to the Masonic Temple, (I think it was) through the crisp winter night, and listen to that thrilling voice of his, so charged with subtle meaning and subtle music, as shipwrecked men on a raft to the hail of a ship that came with unhopèd-for food and rescue. . . . And who that saw the audience will ever forget it, where everyone still capable of fire, or longing to renew in himself the half-forgotten sense of it, was gathered? . . . I hear again that rustle of sensation, as they turned to exchange glances over some pithier thought, some keener flash of that humor which always played about the horizon of his mind like heat-lightning. . . . To some of us that long-past experience remains as the most marvelous and fruitful we have ever had. . . . Did they say he was disconnected? So were the stars, that seemed larger to our eyes, as we walked homeward with prouder stride over the creaking snow. And were not *they* knit together by a higher logic than our mere senses could master? Were we en-

thusiasts? I hope and believe we were, and am thankful to the man who made us worth something for once in our lives. If asked what was left? what we carried home? we should not have been careful for an answer. It would have been enough if we had said that something beautiful had passed that way.

**Looseness of general structure.** If people were puzzled to follow the drift of Emerson's lectures,—and they often were,—it was because most of them were so vague in outline. They literally did drift. There were two or three explanations for this defect. One was that Emerson seldom set himself the task of "composing" a complete essay. His method of writing was to put down in his morning hours at the desk the ideas that came to him. As thoughts on subjects dear to him flitted through his mind, he captured some of them as they passed. These were related,—like the moon and the tides and the best times for digging clams,—but when he assembled various paragraphs into a lecture he took no pains to establish "theme coherence" by explaining the connections that were quite clear in his own mind. It happened further, as the years went on, that in making up a new discourse he would select paragraphs from earlier manuscripts, trusting, sometimes too confidently, that they would hang together. And auditors of his lectures in the last years recall how, as he passed from one page to the next, a look of doubt and slight amusement would sometimes confess without apology to an utter lack of connection even between the parts of a sentence.

**Clearness of sentences and diction.** In his sentences and his choice of words, however, there were perfect simplicity and clearness. Here is a passage to illustrate, drawn by the simplest of methods—opening the first volume of Emerson at hand and taking the first paragraph. It happens to be in the essay on "Compensation."

Commit a crime, and the earth is made of glass. Commit a crime, and it seems as if a coat of snow fell on the ground, such as reveals in the wood the track of every partridge and fox and



squirrel and mole. You cannot recall the spoken word, you cannot wipe out the foot-track, you cannot draw up the ladder, so as to leave no inlet or clew. Some damning circumstance always transpires. The laws and substances of nature—water, snow, wind, gravitation—become penalties to the thief.

In this passage of ninety words more than seventy are words of one syllable, and only one of the other eighteen—*transpires*—can baffle the reader or listener even for a moment. The general idea in Emerson's mind is expressed by a series of definite and picturesque comparisons. "Be sure your sin will find you out," he said. To state the passage in other words:

You commit the wicked deed, creep, dodge, run away, come to your hiding place, climb the ladder, and hope for escape. But nature or God—has laid a trap for you. Your footprints are on the new-fallen snow; human eyes follow them to the tell-tale ladder leading to your window; and you are caught. The laws of the universe have combined against you in the snowfall, the impress of your feet, and the weight of the ladder which you could not raise.

There is, perhaps, no great difference in the language used by Emerson and that in the paraphrase, but in the way the sentences are put together Emerson's method of composing is once more illustrated. Emerson suggests; the paraphrase explains. Emerson assumes that the reader is alert and knowing; the paraphraser, that he is a little inattentive and a little dull. Lowell again has summed up the whole matter: "A diction at once so rich and homely as his I know not where to match in these days of writing by the page; it is like homespun cloth-of-gold. The many cannot miss the meaning, and only the few can find it." This is another way of saying that anybody can understand him sentence by sentence, but the wiser the reader the more he can understand of the meaning as a whole, for in Emerson's pages there is much to be read between the lines. For this reason what may be said of his prose applies in still greater degree to his poetry, as it does to all real poetry.

**Emerson's poetry**—ruggedness of form. About his poetry, however, there has been wide disagreement swinging all the way from harsh criticisms to unqualified praise. On the whole a good deal of the argument has been beside the mark, because it has condemned Emerson for the way he wrote instead of estimating the actual value of his verse. In "Merlin" Emerson stated how strong and ringing he believed the poet's voice should be.

Thy trivial harp will never please  
 Or fill my craving ear;  
 Its chords should ring as blows the breeze,  
 Free, peremptory, clear.  
 No jingling serenader's art,  
 Nor tinkle of piano strings,  
 Can make the wild blood start  
 In its mystic springs.  
 The kingly bard  
 Must smite the chords rudely and hard,  
 As with hammer or with mace. . . .

**Resemblance to his prose.** The natural result was that there is the closest of resemblances between much of his verse and some of his most elevated prose. His prose frequently contains poetic flashes; his verse often is spirited prose both in form and substance. In his journal he sometimes wrote in prose form what with a very few changes he later transcribed into verse, and in his essays are many passages which are closely paralleled in his poems. They are the poems of a philosopher. Emerson wrote no narratives, no dramatic poems, no formal odes,<sup>1</sup> almost no poems for special occasions, and when he did write such as the "Concord Hymn" he made the occasion of the Concord fight memorable as an event in world history.

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,  
 Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,  
 Here once the embattled farmers stood  
*And fired the shot heard round the world.*

<sup>1</sup>An ode is any poem, finely wrought and full of high thinking, which is a sustained meditation on a single theme of general interest.

The utter compactness and simplicity of his verse made it at times not only rugged but difficult of understanding. "Brahma," which bewildered many of its first readers, is hard to comprehend only so long as one fails to realize that God is the speaker of the stanzas. The poems are like Bacon's essays in their meanness and unadornment. Had they been more strikingly different from the ordinary measures, they would probably have been both blamed and praised more widely. Few of his poems have become household favorites, but many of his brief passages are quoted by speakers who have little idea as to their source.

Not for all his faith can see  
Would I that cowed churchman be.

Wrought in a sad sincerity.

Earth proudly wears the Parthenon  
As the best gem upon her zone.

. . . if eyes were made for seeing  
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being.

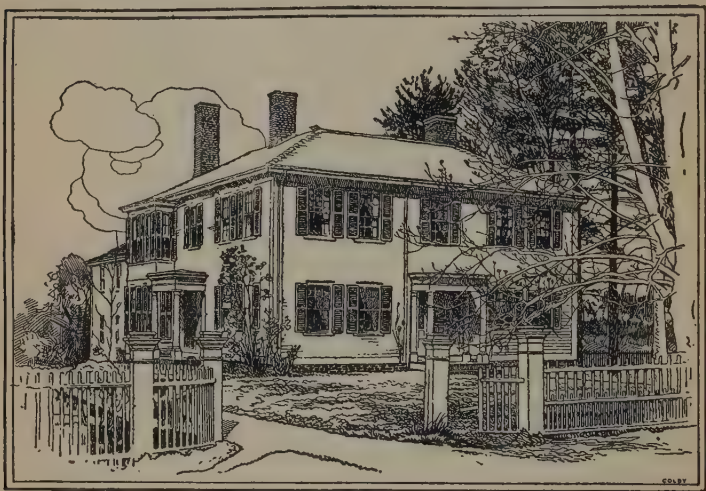
Oh, tenderly the haughty day  
Fills his blue urn with fire!

**Emerson's character.** Those who are fortunate enough to have known him—he died in 1882—all agree that the real Emerson can be known only in part through his printed pages. His life was, after all, his greatest work. He was serene, noble, dignified. His portraits, at whatever age, testify to his fine loftiness. Every hearer speaks of the music of his voice. Withal he was friendly, full of humor, a good neighbor, a loyal townsman, and an engaging host to those who were worthy of his hospitality. Charles Eliot Norton, returning from Europe with him in 1873, when Emerson was sixty-nine years old, wrote in his journal:

Emerson was the greatest talker in the ship's company. He talked with all men, yet was fresh and zealous for talk at night. His serene sweetness, the pure whiteness of his soul, the reflection of his soul in his face, were never more apparent to me.

No single quotation nor any group of them can make real to the young student that quiet refrain of reverent affection which is repeated by scores and hundreds who knew him.

**His independence and his judgment.** Emerson cannot be understood apart from the times in which he lived. Let us take, for example, his two guiding principles in life and see how



EMERSON'S SECOND CONCORD RESIDENCE

they belong both to him and to his whole generation. The first was that the truth can best be found by searching one's own mind and conscience, instead of relying on creed and doctrine. Emerson himself was both an offspring of Puritanism and a rebel against it. Puritan restraint was so born in him that he needed no discipline from without. In matters of conduct, large and small, from boyhood up, he had naturally been well-behaved. And so in his outward bearing from day to day he was a perfect example of what a Puritan child should be.

But in another way he was a rebel against Puritanism, and this was with respect to freedom of thought. He resented Puritanism because it was so much a matter of rules and re-

straints. He was like many people who object to prohibition laws though they themselves have always been total abstainers. It was the theory of the law rather than its working that he resented. It had been for the old-fashioned churchgoers to do what they were told rather than to think what they should do, but in Emerson's day there was a general restlessness. Church control was being shaken off. The theory of the democratic government in America was distinctly on trial. The expansion of the West, the building of railroads, the developing of the factory system, were upsetting the business world. Men needed to be told to keep their heads, to combine the old and the new wisely, and in deciding on what was right to accept no man's judgment but their own. So there was special need for self-reliance.

**His abounding optimism.** This led to the second of Emerson's guiding principles—that there was a controlling force behind all human life. Reasoning from the power that controls the stars in their courses, he could not doubt that there was also a spiritual law. He saw the proofs of the general plan in all the outer world,—in the succession of the seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, the growth of plant and animal life,—and he could not believe that this design stopped short of humankind. He was certain that in the end all would be well with the world. It was his duty and every other man's to be virtuous and to encourage virtue, but as the times were "in God's hand," no man need actively fight the forces of evil. This was a belief easy to cling to in a new country like America, for wickedness could be explained on the ground that in a young nation temporary mistakes were sure to be made—and equally sure to be corrected. Emerson was willing to accept things as they came and hope for the best. "My whole philosophy," he said, "is compounded of acquiescence and optimism."

**Emerson and the present.** Those who most admire Emerson today have perhaps as much optimism as he, but very much less willingness to take things as they come without protest. For certain great changes have taken place, and few are more



important than the spread of a feeling that it is each man's duty to help make a better world. So millions are now trying to retain their independence of judgment and at the same time are showing their sympathy by resisting every sort of social error. They are adopting Emerson's high principles and Bryant's practical methods. They are subscribing to Whittier's line:

O prayer and action, ye are one.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. On what eighteenth-century model was the boyish verse quoted on page 193 evidently based? Was this like Emerson's verse of later years?

2. Of what country has it been most true in the last year or two that rulers "look with apprehension"? Was it in this sense that Emerson said that they looked on America in his youth?

3. See the mention of the Williams-Cotton controversy on page 17 in connection with Emerson's feeling about the literalness of the American mind in its observation of the communion service.

4. Compare the section on beauty in Emerson's "Nature" and Poe's discussion of beauty in the "Poetic Principle" and the "Philosophy of Composition."

5. In connection with the address on the "American Scholar" be sure that you understand the distinctions between the following words: pupil, student, teacher, tutor, instructor, professor, scholar. In what two senses is "scholar" used?

6. How is Emerson's statement "The books of an earlier period will not fit this" at variance with the old Puritan belief about religious toleration (see pages 10, 16)?

7. Read Lowell's essay on "Emerson the Lecturer."

8. Select and analyze a short passage from Emerson for sentence structure and diction. Compare this with the passage from Irving analyzed on page 121.

9. How far is the verse quoted on page 204 regular in form? Is the change intentional or accidental? See the comments on Whitman's changing rhythms on page 338.

10. Are there any valid comparisons between the changing conditions of today and those of Emerson's day (see comments on page 207)?

11. Instances in which Emerson treated the same ideas in both poems and essays could be cited in great number. Here are a few, any one of which is interesting to follow up in search for the parallels:

Poem, "Each and All"; essay, "Compensation."

Poem, "Hamatreya"; essay, "Compensation."

Poem, "Etienne de la Boece"; essay "Friendship."

Poem, "Merlin"; essay, "The Poet."

12. On what source did the Mathers place their reliance for the interpretation and understanding of God's will? On what source did Emerson place his?

13. Emerson always encouraged the development of individualism. Did he believe solitude was necessary for this development? Like Benjamin Franklin he believed every individual should be useful to society and his fellow men, and to this end he said it was essential that a man mingle with his fellows. How did he think both of these habits were possible for the same person?

14. What did Emerson think about consistency? What kind of consistency did he say was the "hobgoblin of little minds"?

15. In answering these questions the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters XII and XX and Chronological Chart No. II will be found helpful:

a. How is Emerson's most important period of authorship related to that of three or four authors we have previously discussed?

b. How does the length of Emerson's life compare with the length of Poe's?

c. What English novelist had three of his best-known works published in three successive years almost corresponding with those in which Emerson's three early essays appeared?

d. From the year of the Divinity School address through the rest of Emerson's life who was on the English throne?

e. Name three or four works written by Emerson's greatest friend on the other side of the water.

f. In England, Carlyle's big work was done, Dickens's fruitful period was practically over, and Wordsworth was in his last days by 1850. Can you make similar statements about three American authors by the time Emerson's "Representative Men" was published?

## CHAPTER XV

HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862)

### SUGGESTED READINGS

HENRY DAVID THOREAU. *Walden*: "Economy," "Where I Lived and what I Lived For," "Solitude," "The Village," "The Pond in Winter," "Conclusion." (An inexpensive edition of "Walden" may be had in the Riverside Literature Series, Houghton Mifflin Company.)

Passages are found in such collections as the following:

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 235-253. Ginn and Company.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 507-515. Ginn and Company.

FOERSTER, NORMAN. *Chief American Prose Writers*, pp. 435-494. Houghton Mifflin Company.

In the chapter on "Economy" what does Thoreau say are the four material necessities for living, and how does he reduce each to lowest possible terms?

What passages in "The Pond in Winter" are of scientific interest, and what are more purely literary? Does Thoreau deliberately change, or does he drift from one to the other?

How do Thoreau's ideas on solitude compare with Emerson's? Does Thoreau seem to find in society anything corresponding to Emerson's feeling for friendship?

Who are the two visitors who come of winter evenings "when the snow falls fast"?

What does Thoreau find to esteem or value in the village?

Read in any of Thoreau's works that interest you for examples of aggressive exaggeration or aggressive self-consciousness.

Read any one or two essays of Thoreau for his allusions to science or the sciences and his respect for them.

Read any one or two essays of Thoreau for the natural history element in them, the kinds of things alluded to, and the importance of them.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

The growth of Henry David Thoreau : birth and education

    Labors and travels

    Friendship with Emerson

    "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers"

    "Walden"

    Where he lived and what he escaped from

Thoreau as a critic of society

    His independence in theory

    His dependence in fact

    His lack of "high seriousness"

    His deliberate exaggeration

Thoreau, the poet-naturalist

    The naturalist

    The poet

Thoreau's later years

    The coming of recognition

    His support of Walt Whitman and John Brown

    His long illness and death

**The growth of Henry D. Thoreau : birth and education.**

Henry D. Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts, in 1817. His grandfather, John Thoreau, a Frenchman, had crossed to America in 1773 and had married a woman of Scotch birth in 1781. His mother came from a Connecticut family of much earlier settlement in America, but his more striking traits seem to have passed to him from his father's side. He was a normal, out-of-door, fun-loving boy, though with more than average fondness for books. At Harvard, where he graduated in 1837, he was able but unconventional. He was more or less out of patience with the narrow course of study, and the spirit of rivalry among the boys which made them work quite as much for class ranking as for the educational value of what they learned. Toward the end of his senior year this contempt for college honors came to a head. He had been ill, and on his return, as the wise President Quincy put it, revealed "some notions concerning emulation and college rank, which had a

natural tendency to diminish his zeal, if not his exertions." When the faculty resented this, even to the extent of planning to withdraw scholarship support, the president took up his cause and backed him because he was a good boy even though he was not an ambitious student. It was appropriate that Emerson should have written in his young townsman's behalf, for his own experience had not been altogether different.

**Labors and travels.** The story of Thoreau's remaining years is quickly told. He lived, unmarried, a kind of care-free, independent life that in a day-laborer would be called shiftless. Many of his townsmen found fault with his oddities—his brusque manners, abrupt speech, and radical opinions, and his unwillingness to work for money unless he needed it at once. Yet he was less irregular than he was reputed to be. From 1838 to 1841 he conducted a very successful school in Concord with his brother John, giving it up only with the failure of John's health; and he had throughout his life a hand in the family business, first of pencil-making and later of preparing a black lead for electrotyping. However, he was not an ordinary routine man. Like Crèvecoeur, whom he variously suggests, he was a surveyor and a handy man with tools. Ten years after graduation he wrote to the secretary of his college class:

I don't know whether mine is a profession, or a trade, or what not. . . . I am a schoolmaster, a private Tutor, a Surveyor, a Gardener, a Farmer, a Painter (I mean a House Painter), a Carpenter, a Mason, a Day-laborer, a Pencil-maker, a Glass-papermaker, a Writer, and sometimes a Poetaster.

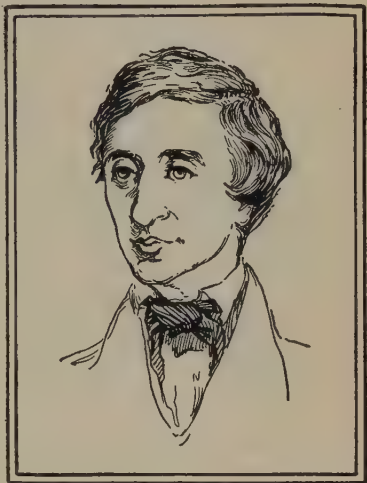
So as he was able to turn an honest penny whenever he needed one, and as his needs were few, he worked at intervals and betweenwhiles shocked many of his industrious townfolk by spending long days talking with his neighbors, studying the ways of plants and animals in the near-by woods and waters, and occasionally leaving the village for trips to the wilds of Canada, to the Maine woods, to Cape Cod, to Connecticut, and, once or twice on business, to New York City and beyond.



**Friendship with Emerson.** In the meanwhile he became a devoted disciple and friend of Emerson. From the outset Emerson delighted in his "free and erect mind, which was capable of making an else solitary afternoon sunny with his simplicity and clear perception." They differed as good friends should, Emerson acquiescing in laws and practices which he could not approve, and Thoreau defying them. The common illustration is on the issue of tax-paying. Emerson, as a property-holder, paid about two hundred dollars and refused to protest at what was probably an undue assessment. Thoreau, outraged at the national policy in connection with the Mexican War, refused on principle to pay his few dollars for poll tax and had to be shut up by his good friend Sam Staples, collector, deputy-sheriff, and jailer, who tried in vain to lend him the money. Emerson visited him at the jail, where followed the historic exchange of questions: "Henry, why are you here?" "Waldo, why are you not here?"

The records of the rambles of the two men are many. In his memorial essay on Thoreau, Emerson wrote:

It was a pleasure and a privilege to walk with him. He knew the country like a fox or a bird, and passed through it as freely by paths of his own. He knew every track in the snow or on the ground, and what creature had taken this path before him. . . . On the day I speak of he looked for the *Menyanthes*, detected it across the wide pool, and on examination of its florets, decided it had been in flower five days.



HENRY DAVID THOREAU

An early portrait

Emerson's records after walks with Thoreau are full of wood lore. He may have recognized the plants himself, but he seldom recorded them except when he had been with his more expert friend.

**"A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers."** In 1839 Thoreau, in company with his brother, spent a week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers, from which he drew the material



THE WALDEN HUT, CONCORD

published ten years later in a volume with that title. It is a meandering record of the things he saw during the seven days and the thoughts suggested by them. In his lifetime the book was so complete a commercial failure that after some years he took back seven hundred of the thousand copies printed. From 1845 to 1847 he indulged in his best-known experience, his "hermitage" at Walden Pond, a little way out from Concord. This gave him the subject matter for

his most famous book, "Walden," published in 1854 and much more successful in point of sales. These two volumes, together with a few prose essays and a modest number of poems, were all that was given to the public during his lifetime.

**"Walden."** "Walden," on the surface, is an account of the two years and two months of his residence at the lakeside, but it is really, like his sojourn there, a commentary and criticism on the ordinary routine of life. In the chapter on "Where I Lived and what I Lived For" he wrote :

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. . . . I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout

all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why, then, to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

**Where he lived and what he escaped from.** The actual report of his days by the lakeside can be separated from his decision as to what they were worth. He went out near the end of March, 1845, to a piece of land owned by Emerson on the shore of the pond. He cut his own timber, bought a laborer's shanty for the boards and nails, during the summer put up a brick chimney, and, counting sundry minor expenses, secured a tight and dry—and very homely—four walls and ceiling for a total cost of \$28.12½. Fuel he was able to cut; food he largely raised; his clothing bill was slight; so that his account for the first year runs as follows:

House . . . . .	\$28.12½
Farm, one year . . . . .	14.72½
Food, eight months . . . . .	8.74
Clothing, etc., eight months . . . . .	8.40¾
Oil, etc., eight months . . . . .	2.00
	<hr/>
	\$61.99¾

To offset these expenses he recorded

Farm produce sold . . . . .	\$23.44
Earned by day labor . . . . .	13.34
	<hr/>
	\$36.78

leaving a net outlay of \$25.21¾, which was about the cash in hand with which he started. The expense of the second year did not, of course, include the heaviest of the first-year items—the cost of the house.

I learned from my two years' experience that it would cost incredibly little trouble to obtain one's necessary food, even in this latitude. . . . In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain oneself on this earth is not a hardship

but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely ; as the pursuits of the simpler nations are still the sports of the more artificial. It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow, unless he sweats easier than I do.

**Thoreau as a critic of society—his independence in theory.** So much for the external account of the Walden years ; but in addition to the bare statement of facts, Thoreau went at some length into his theory of life. This is contained chiefly in the following chapters: I, "Economy" (the longest, amounting to one fourth of the book) ; II, "Where I Lived and what I Lived For" ; V, "Solitude" ; VIII, "The Village" ; and XVIII, "Conclusion." He contended that life had been made complex and burdensome because of the mistaken notion that property was much to be desired. This idea had led men to buy land and build houses, go into trade, construct railways and ships, and to set up government and rival governments, in order to protect the things men owned and those they were buying and selling. He asserted boldly and sometimes savagely a large number of charges against organized society and the men who submitted to it. "The laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity." "The civilized man's pursuits are not worthier than the savage's." "The college student obtains an ignoble and unprofitable leisure, defrauding himself." "Thank God, I can sit and I can stand without the aid of a furniture warehouse." "Men say a stitch in time saves nine, so they take a thousand stitches today to save nine tomorrow." "Society is commonly too cheap." "Wherever a man goes, men will pursue and paw him with their dirty institutions, and, if they can, constrain him to belong to their desperate, odd-fellow society." At this point he challenges comparison again with Crèvecoeur (see page 67). To the hearty immigrant of the eighteenth century the common right to own the soil and to enjoy the fruits of labor offered an amazing contrast to the Old World conditions which denied these privileges to the masses. But to the Yankee Thoreau the ownership of property was oppressive in contrast with the Indians' early right to traverse field and forest without any obliga-

tion to maintain an establishment or "improve" an acreage. In Crèvecoeur's France, where for centuries the people had lived at the mercy of the nobles, ownership of the land seemed a priceless privilege. Thoreau's America seemed so limitless that he apparently supposed land would always be "dirt cheap." Yet, though one prized property and the other despised it, they were alike in not foreseeing the economic changes that the nineteenth century was to produce.

**His dependence in fact.** The more positive side of Thoreau's criticism lies in the passages in which he told how excellent was his way of living, how full of freedom and leisure and how blest with solitude. There is no question that he did live cheaply, easily, happily, and independently, nor is there any question that the love of money and what it represents has made life more of a burden than a joy for millions of people; but there is this immense difference between the independence of Thoreau and the independence of Emerson, that Emerson discharged his duties in the town and in the state, and that Thoreau protested at his duties to the group even while he was using the products of other men's industry. At Walden he lived on land owned by Emerson, who bought it and paid the taxes on it. The bricks and glass and nails in his shanty and the tools he borrowed to build it with were made in mines and factories and kilns, brought to him on the railroads, and handled by the shopkeepers whom he scorned. His food expenses were impressively low, but he was a frequent guest at Concord tables. He was therefore in the ungraceful position of being a dependent on society while he was carrying on a kind of guerrilla warfare against it.

**His lack of "high seriousness."** As a citizen and as a critic of society Thoreau lacked the "high seriousness" of his greater townsman Emerson. Instead of being serenely self-reliant he was often irritable; and instead of being nobly dignified he was nervously on guard against deserved rebuke. Emerson frequently uttered and wrote striking sentences which surprise one into pleased attention. Thoreau came out with smart and



clever sayings like an eager and half-naughty boy who is trying to shock his elders. Almost the only rejoinder that his protests called forth must have been disturbing to him, because Oliver Wendell Holmes was so patronizing as he wrote his "Contentment." "This 'Walden' is an interesting argument from a well-meaning young man," Holmes seems to have said,

Little *I* ask, *my* wants are few;

and then in playful satire he told about the hut—of stone—on Beacon Street, that fronts the sun, where he too could live content with a well-set table, the best of clothes, furniture, jewelry, paintings, and a fast horse when he chose to take an airing. This was the attitude of many good-humored men and women of the world who were inclined to smile indulgently at whatever came out of Concord.

**His deliberate exaggeration.** However, a fair estimate of Thoreau and his case against the world should steer the wise course between taking him too seriously and literally and not taking him seriously at all, between Stevenson's scathing attack in "Familiar Portraits" and Holmes's supercilious "Contentment." If one elects to act as a prosecuting attorney, one can accuse Thoreau of being a reckless talker, and of caring more to make a striking statement than a true one. But if one chooses to value him as a friend might, one can defend him in the light of a warning and a confession of his own: "I trust that you realize what an exaggerator I am,—that I lay myself out to exaggerate whenever I have an opportunity,—pile Pelion upon Ossa, to reach heaven so." This is the very point of his title-page inscription to "Walden": "I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up." It is easy to compare Emerson and Thoreau to the disadvantage of the younger man. But at one point they were quite alike, and that is in the fact that both were more social in their lives than in their writings. Thoreau was not an unqualified anarchist, or hermit, or loafer. He was more capable

and industrious than he admits; he was devoted to his family, and a loyal friend. In his protest at the ways of the world he was, in a manner, "whistling to keep his courage up," and often his whistling became rather shrill.

**Thoreau the poet-naturalist.** The greater part of "Walden," and, indeed, of his writing as a whole, is the work of a naturalist—the work included in such chapters as "Sounds," "The Ponds," "Brute Neighbors," "Former Inhabitants," and "Winter Visitors," "Winter Animals," and "The Pond in Winter." In the two generations since Crèvecoeur's "Letters from an American Farmer" no one on this side of the Atlantic had written about the out-of-doors with such fullness and intimate knowledge. In this respect, moreover, Thoreau, instead of being a student or imitator of Emerson, was his guide and instructor. Although



HENRY DAVID THOREAU

modern science owes little to him and has corrected many of his findings, it recalls his help to Agassiz in collecting specimens; and modern literature has produced only one or two men, like John Burroughs and John Muir, who write of nature with the same sympathy and beauty. The title of his friend Channing's book "Thoreau: the Poet-Naturalist" suggests the whole story. He was fascinated by growing things. He could not learn enough about their ways. The life in Concord's rivers, ponds, fields, and woods by day and night and during the changing seasons was an endless study and pleasure. In his journal he kept a detailed record of the pageant of the year, which after his death was assembled in the four vol-

umes "Spring in Massachusetts," "Summer," "Autumn," and "Winter." When he went to other parts of the country, he carried his knowledge of Concord as a sort of reference book. From Staten Island he wrote: "The woods are now full of a large honeysuckle in full bloom, which differs from ours. . . . Things are very forward here compared with Concord." In the Maine woods he recognized his old familiars, but in more rugged, primitive surroundings than those at home. The sandy stretches of Cape Cod furnished him daily with fascinating contrasts in natural surroundings and in their effect on the residents. On his trip to Mount Washington he found forty-two of the forty-six plants he expected, adding one to his list when, after falling and spraining his ankle, he limped a few steps and said, "Here is the arnica, anyhow," reaching for an *arnica mollis*, which he had not found before. And when he chose to put into essay form some of the information he had gleaned, he was exact without being technical and never for long repressed his lively spirits.

**Thoreau the poet.** The poet in him brought him back continually to the beauty in what he saw. He did not care much to philosophize about creation like Emerson; the sheer facts of it meant so much more to him. Nor did he care to expound the beauties of nature; he simply held them up to view. Take, for example, this bit from the "Pond in Winter," in which the last twelve words are quite as beautiful as the thing they describe:

Standing on the snow-covered plain, as if in a pasture amid the hills, I cut my way first through a foot of snow, and then a foot of ice, and open a window under my feet, where, kneeling to drink, I look down into the quiet parlor of fishes, pervaded by a softened light as through a window of ground glass, with its bright sanded floor the same as in summer; there a perennial waveless serenity reigns as in the amber, twilight sky.

Or, again, this prose poem quoted in Channing's book:

One more confiding heifer, the fairest of the herd, did by degrees approach as if to take some morsel from our hands, while our hearts leaped to our mouths with expectation and delight. She by

degrees drew near with her fair limbs (progressive), making pretence of browsing; nearer and nearer, till there was wafted to us the bovine fragrance,—cream of all the dairies that ever were or will be; and then she raised her gentle muzzle toward us, and snuffed an honest recognition within hand's reach. I saw it was possible for his herd to inspire with love the herdsman. She was as delicately featured as a hind. Her hide was mingled white and fawn-color, and on her muzzle's tip there was a white spot not bigger than a daisy; and on her side turned toward me, the map of Asia plain to see.

The following passages contain the main features of contemporary Imagist poetry (see page 425):

I am no more lonely than the loon in the pond that laughs so loud, or than Walden pond itself. What company has that lonely lake, I pray? . . . I am no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture, or a bean-leaf, or sorrel, or a horse-fly, or a bumble-bee. I am no more lonely than the Mill Brook, or a weather-cock, or the north star, or the south wind, or an April shower, or a January thaw, or the first spider in a new house.

The wind has gently murmured through the blinds, or puffed with feathery softness against the windows, and occasionally sighed like a summer zephyr, lifting the leaves along, the livelong night. The meadow-mouse has slept in his snug gallery in the sod, the owl has sat in a hollow tree in the depth of the swamp; the rabbit, the squirrel, and the fox have all been housed. The watch-dog has lain quiet on the hearth, and the cattle have stood silent in their stalls. . . . But while the earth has slumbered, all the air has been alive with feathery flakes descending, as if some northern Ceres reigned, showering her silvery grain over all the fields.

No yard; but unfenced Nature reaching to your very sills. A young forest growing up under your windows, and wild sumachs and blackberry vines breaking through into your cellar; sturdy pitch-pines rubbing and creaking against the shingles for want of room, their roots reaching quite under the house. Instead of a scuttle or a blind blown off in the gale,—a pine tree torn up by

the roots behind your house for fuel. Instead of no path to the front-yard gate in the Great Snow,—no gate—no front yard, and no path to the civilized world.

His manner of writing was so like Emerson's that the comments on the style of the elder man (see pages 202–205) apply for the most part to that of the younger.

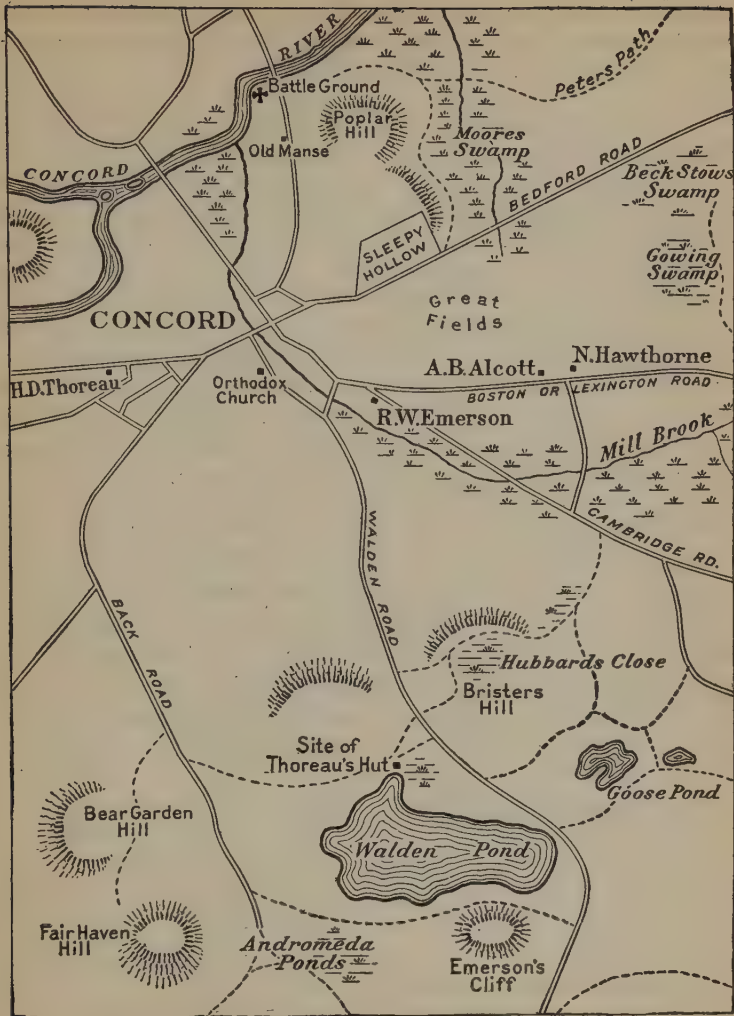
**Thoreau's later years—the coming of recognition.** From the year of "Walden's" appearance to the end of Thoreau's life, in 1862, three matters are specially worthy of record. The first is that recognition began at last to come. This probably did not hasten his writing, but it released some of the great accumulation of manuscript in his possession. Several of the magazines accepted single papers, and the *Atlantic Monthly* took eight of his articles, although seven of them were not published until the two years just after his death. In these and the next two years five new volumes of his were published; others followed in the eighties and nineties; but it was not until 1906 that a complete and final edition appeared.

**His support of Walt Whitman and John Brown.** The second significant thing is his friendly support of two of the most strikingly unconventional men of his day—Walt Whitman, and John Brown of Harpers Ferry. Of Whitman he wrote, when few were reading him, and few of these approving:

I have just read his second edition (which he gave me), and it has done me more good than any reading for a long time. . . . I have found his poems exhilarating, encouraging. . . . We ought to rejoice greatly in him. He occasionally suggests something a little more than human. You can't confound him with the other inhabitants of Brooklyn or New York. How they must shudder when they read him! . . . Since I have seen him, I find I am not disturbed by any brag or egoism in his book. He may turn out the least of a braggart of all, having a better right to be confident.

John Brown he had met in Concord only a few weeks before the Harpers Ferry raid. Two weeks after the capture of Brown he delivered an address on the issues, first in Concord and





A LITERARY MAP OF CONCORD

later in Worcester and in Boston, defying his friends who advised him to silence. And after the execution of the old Kansan he arranged funeral services in Concord.

It turns what sweetness I have to gail, to hear, or hear of, the remarks of some of my neighbors. When we heard at first that he was dead, one of my townsmen observed that "he died as the fool dieth"; which, pardon me, for an instant suggested a likeness in him dying to my neighbor living. . . . This event advertises me that there is such a fact as death,—the possibility of a man's dying. It seems as if no man had ever lived before; for in order to die you must first have lived. . . . I hear a good many pretend that they are going to die; or that they have died, for aught that I know. Nonsense! I'll defy them to do it. They haven't got life enough in them. They'll deliquesce like fungi; and keep a hundred eulogists mopping the spot where they left off. Only a half a dozen or so have died since the world began.

**His long illness and death.** The final fact of these later years is the breakdown of his own health. In spite of the moderation and sanity of his out-of-door habits, his strength began to fail him before he had reached what should be the prime of life. From the ages of thirty-eight to forty he had to exercise the greatest care, avoiding any heavy exertion. A severe cold caught in 1860 developed soon into consumption, which carried him off in the spring of 1862 at the age of forty-five.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Thoreau's expense account of his first year at Walden is misleading if applied direct to the present. By how much should the items be multiplied in order to furnish a fair comparison?

2. In what ways has daily living become more complex since 1854? In what respects has it become simplified?

3. Read Emerson's "Woodnotes," Part I, sections 2 and 3, for a passage which well characterizes Thoreau, though it is said to have been written without reference to him.

4. Were Thoreau's comments on society and the State disloyal? Would they have made trouble for him between 1915 and 1920?

5. Read "Economy" in "Walden" and the second and third of Crèvecoeur's "Letters from an American Farmer" for the contrast in ideas on property, or for the contrast in ideas on citizenship.

6. What changes have taken place in the United States in the ease or difficulty in gaining ownership of land, and what general shifts in value of Eastern and Western land?

7. Is there any literary value in exaggeration, or any justification of it? Can exaggeration be found in the works of famous writers of the past or of the present?

8. Read the characterizations of Thoreau in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Familiar Studies of Men and Books" and in James Russell Lowell's "My Study Windows," and decide whether either or both should be at all modified.

9. Read John Burroughs's essay in "Indoor Studies" as a comment by a fellow naturalist.

10. Are the passages quoted on pages 220 and 221 poetry or only poetic prose? Is there a hard-and-fast line between the two?

11. What years of the Brook Farm experiment was Thoreau at Walden?

12. Why must he have preferred Walden to Brook Farm?

13. Was he as independent of society and other men's labor as he thought he was, particularly at Walden?

14. Does the fact that Emerson paid the tax corresponding to the one which Thoreau refused to pay, mean that Emerson approved of the government's policy in connection with the Mexican War? If not, how do you explain his paying it?

15. The Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters XX and XXV may be used to advantage in answering these questions:

a. When did Thoreau's richest period of authorship begin? With what general time-relationship to Emerson, Poe, Bryant? (See Chronological Chart No. II, p. 381.)

b. What four other Americans were doing their most important work in this same period?

c. What great American novel had been published two years before "Walden"? What one two years before that? Who were the authors?

d. Which has been increasing more rapidly, the population of free or of slave states? What is the comparison in 1840? in 1850? in 1860?

e. Between 1840 and 1860 what states were admitted to the Union? How far west are two of these? By 1860 about what proportion of the states composing the Union as it is at present had been admitted?

## CHAPTER XVI

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE (1804-1864)

### SUGGESTED READINGS

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE. *Novels*: One of the following three in this order of preference—The House of the Seven Gables, The Scarlet Letter, The Marble Faun. (May be obtained in the Everyman's Library, E. P. Dutton & Company.) *Short Stories and Sketches*: First few pages of The Custom-House (which is a preface to The Scarlet Letter), The Old Manse, Young Goodman Brown, The Maypole of Merry Mount, Tales of the Province House, Endicott and the Red Cross, The Great Stone Face. (The "Twice-Told Tales" may be had in inexpensive editions in the Riverside Literature Series, Houghton Mifflin Company.)

Passages from such collections as the following:

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 254-286. Ginn and Company.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 352-366. Ginn and Company.

FOERSTER, NORMAN. *Chief American Prose Writers*, pp. 193-300. Houghton Mifflin Company.

A novel taken up by school or college student should be read as the author intended it to be read, at a reasonable speed, for the pleasure to be found in it. If necessary it should be looked over again after the first whole impression is gained. It will help toward a clear understanding of Hawthorne, however, if the reader think of the following points in advance and have them in the back of his mind as he reads:

What is the plot in briefest terms? (For example: "David Copperfield" is the story of a boy who suffered early sorrows and hardships, fell into good hands, fought his way to success as an author, had various experiences with strong and weak and faithful and treacherous friends, first married a frivolous girl and after her death a wise and fine woman, with whom he "lived happily ever after.")

How many leading characters are there? What sorts of men and women are there? Are they lifelike?

What sorts of backgrounds does he use? Are they imagined or real?

What is the connection between the object mentioned in the title and the story as a whole?

Is the story written to appeal to your emotions or to your intellect? to make you thrill or to make you think?

How is the theme of sin introduced and carried through?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

Hawthorne not a group man

His inborn affections for Salem as a place

His moral distrust of Salem traditions

The life of Hawthorne

His boyhood

His college experience

His habits of solitude and first writings

"Twice-Told Tales" and first ventures in active life

"The Scarlet Letter" and popular success

The reflection of Hawthorne's experience in his works

Definite backgrounds

Detail studies and plot suggestions

Reflections of his own personality

His repeated treatment of sin

His desire to escape from the past

The artistry of Hawthorne

His breadth of view and technical skill

His combining of truth and unreality

His plot construction and his style

**Hawthorne not a group man.** Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), although twice a resident of Concord, was hardly a member of the Concord group. He did not in any sense belong to Concord, he was not an intimate of those who did, he lived there for only seven years at two different periods in his career, and, wherever he lived, he was in thought and conduct anything but a group man. Yet he dwelt there for the first three years and more after his marriage (1842-1846), and he developed enough of a liking for the town to return to it for the closing four years of his life. What the town was by tradition



and what it had become through Emerson's presence there made it the most congenial spot in America for Hawthorne.

**His inborn affection for Salem as a place.** He lived far longer in Salem,—all but twelve out of his first forty-six years,—and he was a member of the town of his heritage both far more and far less. Through instinctive feelings which were quite beyond his control he belonged to this seacoast town from the bottom of his heart.

This old town of Salem—my native place, though I have dwelt much away from it, both in boyhood and maturer years—possesses, or did possess, a hold on my affections, the force of which I have never realized during my seasons of actual residence here. . . . And yet, though invariably happiest elsewhere, there is within me a feeling for old Salem, which, in lack of a better phrase, I must be content to call affection. The sentiment is probably assignable to the deep and aged roots which my family has struck into the soil. It is now nearly two centuries and a quarter since the original Briton, the earliest emigrant of my name, made his appearance in the wild and forest-bordered settlement, which has since become a city. And here his descendants have been born and died, and have mingled their earthly substance with the soil; until no small portion of it must necessarily be akin to the mortal frame wherewith, for a little while, I walk the streets. In part, therefore, the attachment which I speak of is the mere sensuous sympathy of dust for dust. Few of my countrymen can know what it is; nor, as frequent transplantation is perhaps better for the stock, need they consider it desirable to know.

**His moral distrust of Salem traditions.** Yet, strong as this unreasoned feeling was, the traditions of Salem were so disagreeable to him that he did not care to live there.

But the sentiment has likewise its moral quality. The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination, as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a sort of home feeling for the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present phase of the town. I seem to have a stronger claim to

a residence here on account of this grave, bearded, sable-cloaked and steeple-crowned progenitor . . . than for myself, whose name is seldom heard and my face hardly known. He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a better persecutor. . . . His son, too, inherited the persecuting spirit. . . . I know not whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent, and ask pardon of heaven for their cruelties; or whether they are now groaning under the heavy consequences of them, in another state of being. At all events, I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them—as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race, for many a long year back, would argue to exist—may be now and henceforth removed.

In this respect Hawthorne's attitude toward Salem—but really toward New England and all America—was like that of a man who has inherited debts of honor which he feels bound to pay, though he never would have incurred them himself.

**The life of Hawthorne—his boyhood.** Hawthorne was born in this town of his affection and his distrust on the Fourth of July, 1804. When he was four years old his father, a shipmaster, died during a foreign voyage. The sobering effect of this loss was increased by the extent to which Mrs. Hawthorne gave way to it, for she dedicated her life to mourning, not only withdrawing from the outer world but even taking all her meals apart from her little daughters and her son. An accident to the boy when he was nine years old handicapped him by keeping him out of active sports for the next three years. So he developed, a bookish child in a muffled household. At this time he was reading Shakespeare, Milton, and the eighteenth-century poets; later he was to shift to Sir Walter Scott and the Arabian Nights. In his fifteenth year the family lived together for several months at Raymond, Maine, a "town" of half a dozen houses. "There," he told his publisher, James T. Fields, later in life, "I lived . . . like a bird of the air, so

perfect was the freedom I enjoyed. But it was there I first got my cursed habits of solitude."

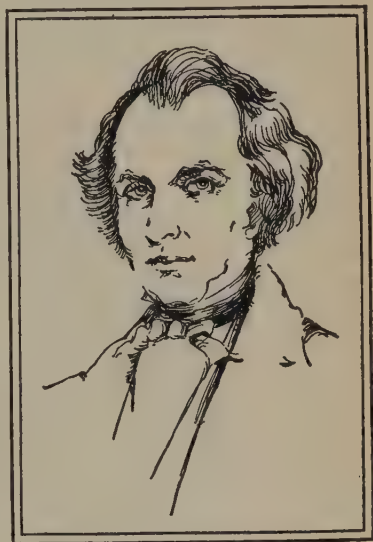
**His college experience.** The need of proper schooling caused his reluctant return to Salem, and he was glad to escape from it again when he went back in Maine to Bowdoin College at the age of seventeen. He was not at all eager for college, but



AN EARLY VIEW OF BOWDOIN COLLEGE

regarded it as an unavoidable step in his training. At the same time he rejected the prospect of entering the Church, the law, or the practice of medicine, and even as a freshman he wrote to his mother, "What do you think of my becoming an author, and relying for support upon my pen?" With such a point of view he did no better work than could have been expected. He was more interested in the reading of his own choice than in the assigned studies. He was somewhat frivolous, and even incurred discipline for minor offenses about which he wrote Madam Hawthorne with amused and amusing frankness. His chief debt to the college was for three lasting friendships. He finished a shade below the middle of his class and left Bowdoin with no more college interest than he had brought to it.

**His habits of solitude and first writings.** Hawthorne's life for the twelve years after graduation explains why he later referred so bitterly to his "cursed habits of solitude." The household to which he returned from Bowdoin was almost utterly unsocial. His mother's way of life had been adopted by his two sisters as well. The four members of the family—one is tempted to refer to them as "inmates"—saw very little of each other as the days went on. The young author neither gave nor received open sympathy. His writing, done in solitude, was not read to the rest. Conditions would have been abnormal enough if he had come back to this dull monotony from busy days in the outer world; but of the outer world he knew nothing. Not twenty people in all Salem, he said, were even aware of his existence. If he left the house during sunlight hours, it was to take long walks in the country. He swam in the near-by sea before the town was stirring; he walked the streets in the shadows of evening. His vital energy was derived from reading and was spent on his own manuscripts.



NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

An early portrait

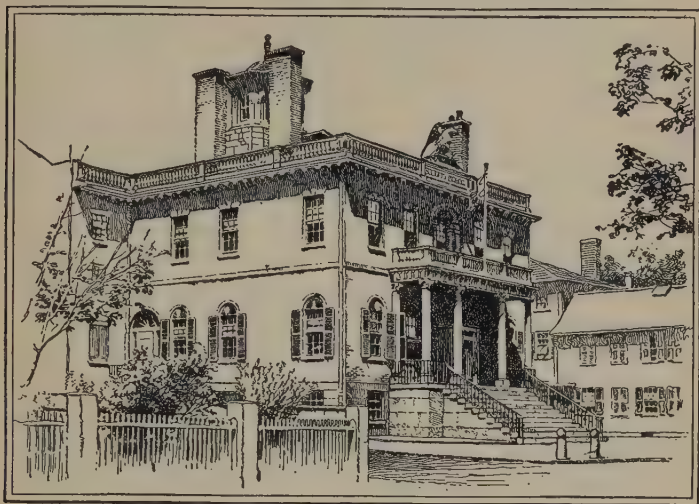
His writing during these years was done with patient persistence and without any reward from the public. His first novel, "Fanshawe," was published in 1828 at his expense, was a failure, and was soon suppressed—as far as the discouraged author could recover the copies issued. From 1829 to 1836 the *Token*—a book which was really a magazine issued once a year

by S. G. Goodrich of Boston—was his main channel of publication, taking in these years about twenty-five stories and sketches. Through Goodrich he had also found a market for his wares in the *New England Magazine*, and toward the end of the period in the *American Monthly Magazine* of New York, and, best of all, with the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, which was the periodical of the Irving tradition and point of view. But though he was not unsuccessful in getting his work into print, he enjoyed no reputation from it, for only a few keen critics took any notice of it, and none of these was fully aware of the author's output, since he wrote not under one but under several assumed names. The lack of companions either at home or abroad was bound to tell on Hawthorne's nerves and temper—he had become far too thin-skinned—and to result, as it did, in the touches of ill temper which the student finds from time to time in his accounts of himself. It also resulted in the deep self-distrust and discouragement which grew steadily on him. "I have made a captive of myself," he wrote finally to his old college classmate Longfellow, "and put me into a dungeon, and now I cannot find the key to let myself out,—and if the door were open, I should be almost afraid to come out. You tell me that you have met with troubles and changes. I know not what these may have been, but I can assure you that trouble is the next best thing to enjoyment, and that there is no fate in this world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows."

**"Twice-Told Tales" and first ventures in active life.** With 1837 the friendship of two college associates began to assert itself. One of these was Horatio Bridge, a man of political influence and a large heart, and the other, Franklin Pierce, soon to be the president of the country. Through Bridge the publication of "Twice-Told Tales" was brought about in 1838; through the influence of both, Hawthorne was appointed weigher and gauger in the Boston Customhouse. With this post Hawthorne for the first time entered into active life; yet when he lost it with the change of political administration in 1841



he was somewhat relieved. His engagement to Sophia Peabody led him next to attempt to make a living through residence and partnership in the Brook Farm enterprise during 1841 (see page 186). Again he was oppressed by having the world too much with him, and in 1842, on his marriage, he settled in the seclusion of Concord for his first residence of something over



THE SALEM CUSTOMHOUSE

three years. At the end of this time the needs of his growing family made it necessary to have an assured income, and once more through the political influence at his command he was given a Federal office, this time as head of the customhouse at Salem. He held this position, like the one at Boston, until a political reverse took it away from him in 1849.

**"The Scarlet Letter" and popular success.** Hawthorne was now nearly forty-six years old. For the twelve years following the publication of "Twice-Told Tales" he had accomplished almost nothing in creative writing. The sympathy and companionship of his marriage, much as it meant to him, was offset

as far as authorship went by the distracting need for money. With the loss of the post at Salem the outlook was almost desperate. In the dark hour, however, it appeared that his wife had saved a little from his slender earnings, and in the following months he wrote what became his first widely recognized work—"The Scarlet Letter." The first edition of this was exhausted in two weeks. Popular attention encouraged him at once to write far more rapidly than ever before. In 1851 "The House of the Seven Gables" was issued; in 1852 "The Blithedale Romance"; and in the meanwhile various lesser narratives appeared. At this stage his political friendships once more proved of value, and through the influence of Pierce, now president, he was enabled to go abroad in the consular service, first to Liverpool and then to Rome. His foreign residence continued until 1860 and resulted, in authorship, with the last of his great romances, "The Marble Faun"; the book of English reminiscences, "Our Old Home"; and the "Italian Notebooks." With his return to America he went back to Concord, but though he was quite free and undistracted by money matters, his major period as author was over, and he died in 1864, leaving behind him only the unimportant stories "Doctor Grimshawe's Secret," "Septimius Felton," and the uncompleted "Dolliver Romance."

**The reflection of Hawthorne's experience in his works—definite backgrounds.** What Hawthorne wrote was very clearly the fruit of his ancestry and upbringing. His "American Notebooks," the product of the late thirties and the forties, show how definite was the preparation for the harvest to come. It was the gift of Hawthorne's imagination to take characters and backgrounds that were drawn from close observation and to shroud them with a kind of unreality. They seem like his imaginings, though they were evidently drawn from the life about him. This is in utter contrast, for example, with the invention of Poe. There never were such individuals as Arthur Gordon Pym or Monsieur Dupin or Fortunato or Roderick Usher; they belong to no time or place. But Arthur Dimmesdale, Jaffrey Pyncheon,

Hollingsworth, and Kenyon; Hester, Phœbe, Zenobia, and Miriam were portraits, made in the image of people who had walked the streets familiar to Hawthorne. Poe's settings are convincingly real. One can see in his mind's eye every detail of the City in the Sea or the ghoulish-woodland of Weir, although one realizes that they never existed in fact; but Boston, Salem, Brook Farm, and Rome supply actual backgrounds for Hawthorne. If the Puritans had builded as securely as the Romans did, the "Scarlet Letter," the "House of the Seven Gables," and the "Blithedale Romance" could be as fully illustrated as the "Marble Faun" often has been from photographs of structures that are standing yet. Again, these actual scenes and people were put into stories based on fact, and the symbols around which they were constructed—like the letter of scarlet, and Faun of Praxiteles—had been seen and touched by the author. The maypole of Merry Mount once stood on the Wollaston hilltop, the great stone face is not yet weathered beyond all recognition, and the legends of the Province House are based on historical facts.

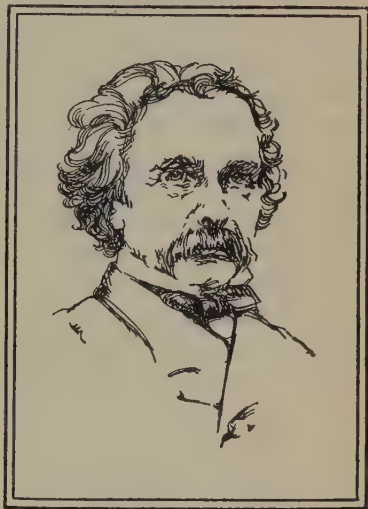
*See note on p. 16*  
**Detail studies and plot suggestions.** In the notebooks, particularly for 1835-1845, there is abundant record of how Hawthorne's fancy was continually at play with the material within his reach. He made definite entries about past events and old buildings. He made detailed studies of odd characters seen in his occasional little journeys into the world. He even saved proper names, phrases, similes, epigrams, which some day might be of use: "Miss Asphyxia Davis," "A lament for life's wasted sunshine," "A scold and a blockhead,—brimstone and wood,—a good match," "Men of cold passions have quick eyes." But far more significant than these definite little items are the many which are suggestive of whole sketches or stories later to be written. Among these the following may easily be identified: "To make one's own reflection in a mirror the subject of a story"; "A snake taken into a man's stomach and nourished there from fifteen years to thirty-five, tormenting him most horribly. A type of envy or some other evil passion"; "A

person to be in the possession of something as perfect as mortal man has a right to demand; he tries to make it better, and ruins it entirely"; "Some very famous jewel or other thing, much talked of all over the world. Some person to meet with it, and get possession of it in some unexpected manner, amid homely circumstances"; "The influence of a peculiar mind, in close communion with another, to drive the latter to insanity"; "Pandora's Box for a child's story"; "A person to be the death of his beloved in trying to raise her to more than mortal perfection; yet this should be a comfort to him for having aimed so highly and holily"; "To make a story out of a scarecrow, giving it odd attributes"; "A phantom of the old royal governors, or some such shadowy pageant, on the night of the evacuation of Boston by the British." What Hawthorne attempted was essentially what Wordsworth did: to show how full of meaning was the material of everyday life.

**Reflections of his own personality.** In another and more important way Hawthorne's writings show the effect of these long years of preparation, and that is in the way that he himself is reflected in the majority of them, and especially in the four best-known novels. In the quarter-century between his graduation from Bowdoin and the publication of the "Marble Faun" the most striking and the most dangerous feature had been his persistent solitude and the effects of it. He had not withdrawn from the world in contempt; he had unconsciously drifted out of it. He was by no means indifferent to it; on the contrary, he was increasingly sensitive to it. He needed to fill his purse, and he needed encouragement to write. Yet when he went out into active life he was shouldered about by the hustling crowds, who were so used to their own rude ways that they were often quite innocent of the affronts they put upon him. It is a result of this unhappy experience that in the famous romances and in many of the shorter sketches the narrative is woven around two types—a shrinking, oversensitive character and a rude or crafty but always evil-spirited man who stands for the embodiment of the outer world. For Hester and for Arthur Dimmes-

dale, for Hepzibah and Clifford Pyncheon, for Priscilla and for Donatello, no complete separation from the world is possible. No deed which involves them, whether committed by themselves or by others, can be committed without regard to consequences. Always there is a knocking at the gate, as the outer world insists on thrusting itself into the holiest of holies. And this invasion is the more cruel as it is the less deserved. Chillingworth's malign and subtle revenge on Arthur Dimmesdale is a cruel play of fate. It is horrible though not undeserved. But Priscilla, Donatello, and the two pitiful Pyncheons are innocent victims. Hepzibah and Clifford are hounded out of life by a bland representative of the law and the Church, a wolf in the sheep's clothing of respectability. Priscilla falls in love with a reformer, one of the type who, Thoreau complained, pursued and pawed him with their "dirty institutions" and tried to constrain him into their "desperate, odd-fellow society"; she wilts at his touch. Donatello, the embodiment of innocent happiness, is entangled in the web of society and destroyed by the fierce spirit at its center. Hawthorne never would have presented this view so often if he had not for years seen the stream of life rush by him, and for years made his successive efforts to reënter its currents.

This relation to life is summarized in Hawthorne's introduction of Septimius Felton, hero of the last work of his pen. "I am dissevered from it," he says in the opening scene. "It is my doom to be only a spectator of life; to look on as one



NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

A later portrait



apart from it. Is it not well, therefore, that, sharing none of its pleasures and happiness, I should be free of its fatalities, its brevity? How cold I am now, while this whirlpool is eddying all around me." Yet, a moment later he snatches a gun and rushes out of the house to where he can see the British redcoats passing the Concord house. He refrains from shooting, only to be seen by a flanking party, and against his will is forced to fire a deadly bullet. "I have seen and done such things," he says an hour later, "as change a man in a moment. . . . I have done a terrible thing for once . . . one that might well trace a dark line through all my future life." To this degree, then, Hawthorne's surroundings and his own unfolding experience had supplied him with themes and materials.

**His repeated treatment of sin.** Much of the remainder of his work is due to his Puritan inheritance. To this the already quoted passage on old Salem (p. 228) bears witness. It is this which accounts for the gravity of his nature, which has been unfairly but suggestively described as a compound of "seven eighths conscience and the rest remorse," and for his absorption with the problem of sin in the world. "The Scarlet Letter" deals with its immediate effect on the transgressor; the "House of the Seven Gables," with its effect on generations to come; the "Blithedale Romance," with its blighting effect on the reformer, who is selfish and heartless even in his fight against social wrong; the "Marble Faun," with the basic reasons for the existence of evil. Yet, though the Puritan strain in him could determine the direction of his thoughts, it could not determine their goal. Hawthorne recoiled from the Puritan belief that sin was a wile of the devil to be atoned for only through the sufferings of a mediator or the tortures of the damned. He rejected Calvin's fear of eternal punishment for Milton's conclusion that the mind is its own place, and of itself can make a heaven of hell. Furthermore, his charges against the Puritans themselves were more insistent than his charges against their theology. He condemned them for their cruel intolerance and for the arid bleakness of their lives. So, like

Emerson (see page 206), he was at once a product of his ancestry and a living protest against it.

His desire to escape from the past. But Hawthorne was more than a critic of the Puritans; he was in accord with most of the rising liberalism of his day. He felt that through a multitude of changes in government, Church, and industry, the world had for the moment "gone distracted through a morbid activity" and needed above all things a period of quiet in which to recover its balance of judgment. So he distrusted the schemes of "young visionaries," "gray-headed theorists," "uncertain, troubled, earnest wanderers through the midnight of the moral world." Yet he acknowledged that as long as the world could not be put to sleep, restlessness was better than inertia. The radical Holgrave, in the "House of the Seven Gables," is his most sympathetic portrait of young America. A conversation with Phœbe Pyncheon represents him as spokesman for the future, and Phœbe as the voice of the placidly thoughtless present. Her remarks, though brief, are quite as significant as his.

"Just think a moment," cried he . . . "and it will startle you to see what slaves we are to bygone times,—to Death, if we give the matter the right word!"

"But I do not see it," observed Phœbe.

"For example then," continued Holgrave, "a dead man, if he happen to have made a will, disposes of wealth no longer his own; or, if he die intestate, it is distributed in accordance with the notions of men much longer dead than he. A dead man sits on all our judgment seats; and living judges do but search out and repeat his decisions. We read in dead men's books! We laugh at dead men's jokes, and cry at dead men's pathos!—We are sick of dead men's diseases, physical and moral, and die of the same remedies with which dead doctors killed their patients! We worship the living deity according to dead men's forms and creeds. Whatever we seek to do, of our own free motion, a dead man's icy hand obstructs us. Turn our eyes to what point we may, a dead man's white immitigable face encounters them, and freezes our very heart! And we must be dead ourselves before we can begin to have our proper influence on our own world, which will then be

no longer our world, but the world of another generation with which we shall have no shadow of a right to interfere. I ought to have said, too, that we live in dead men's houses; as, for instance, this of the Seven Gables."

"And why not?" said Phœbe, "so long as we can be comfortable in them."

Properly interpreted this conversation implies vigorous criticism of both the youthful speakers. Holgrave's protests are too sweeping, but Phœbe's placid willingness to take things as they come is deadening. As if Hawthorne were afraid his sympathy with Holgrave would not appear, he goes on to say that in the course of time the youth will have to fit his faith to the facts without losing his hopes for the future, "discerning that man's best directed effort accomplishes a kind of dream, while God is the sole worker of realities."

**The artistry of Hawthorne—his breadth of view and technical skill.** It was this breadth of view combined with his technical gifts as a teller of tales that made Hawthorne a great artist; for no degree of skill or cleverness without wisdom behind it can give lasting significance to the work of a man. Yet even though he has a "philosophy of life," the creative artist need not be always pointing a moral or adorning a tale. The abiding convictions he has about life and death need no labeling. They appear, as a man's character does, from his daily talk and conduct. Let Hawthorne state this in his own words:

When romances really do teach anything, or produce any effective operation, it is usually through a far more subtle process than the ostensible one. The author has considered it hardly worth his while, therefore, relentlessly to impale the story with its moral, as with an iron rod,—or, rather, as by sticking a pin through a butterfly,—thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude. A high truth, indeed, fairly, finely, and skilfully wrought out, brightening at every step, and crowning the final development of a work of fiction, may add an artistic glory, but is never any truer, and seldom any more evident, at the last page than at the first.

Now and again Hawthorne forgot this and stopped to expound and explain, which was unnecessary. And now and again he used his powers to gratify his spites by holding living people up to scorn, which was unworthy. But even though he lacked the Olympian serenity of the supreme story-tellers, he wrote as a wise man, and he wrote surpassingly well. It remains, then, to speak of his workmanship.

His combining of truth and unreality.

In the preface to the "House of the Seven Gables," from which the above passage is quoted, Hawthorne discusses his methods as a romancer—how he combines materials at hand, but makes them present the truth of the human heart not as the realist but under circumstances of his own choosing and with a "slight, delicate, and



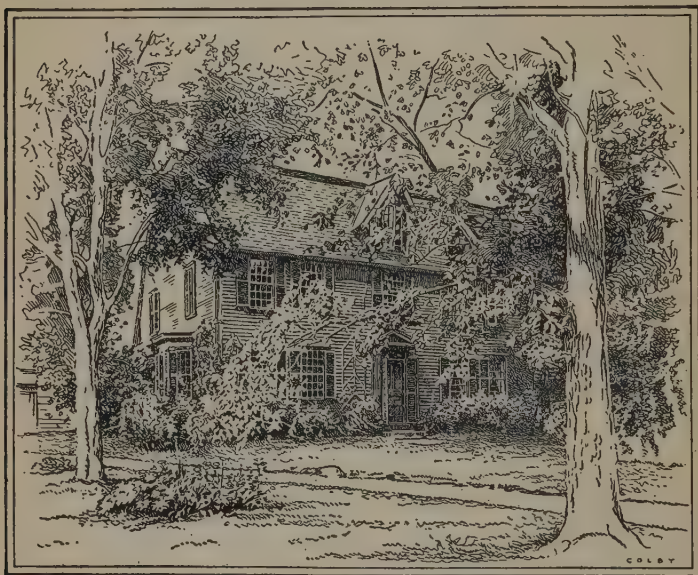
THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES

evanescent flavor" of the marvelous. And this shadowy unreality, he points out, comes from the connection of "a bygone time with the very present that is flitting away from us. It is a legend, prolonging itself, from an epoch now gray in the distance, down into our own broad daylight, and bringing along with it some of its legendary mist." This furnishes a cue to every one of the longer tales and to most of the short ones. Always the outreaching hand of the past plucking at the garments of the present.

His plot construction and his style. In a misty, twilight atmosphere, starting where stories frequently end,—with a



momentous act already performed,—Hawthorne's romances proceed almost by formula. Each is dominated by a physical symbol,—like the scarlet letter or the house of seven gables,—itself a suggestion of some connection with the past, continually recurring, always half mysterious. Each is told in terms of a



THE OLD MANSE, CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

The first residence in Concord of both Emerson and Hawthorne

very small group of characters, of whom three usually emerge farthest from the shadows. The best of his longer works are not put into the "well-made plot" strait-jacket; and on this point Mrs. Hawthorne's testimony is on record that the plots grew out of the people instead of being imposed upon them. Each is told mainly by analyzing and interpreting the changing moods of the actors, and each is garnished with many a meditative commentary on the story text. Finally, each and all of Hawthorne's writings are characterized by a scrupulous nicety



of style, a leisureliness of sentence, a precision of diction that become the courtly manner of the old régime. He is as simple as formality will allow, as formal as simplicity will permit. If we are to liken him to other writers, it will not be to any contemporaries, not even to Mr. Howells. The comparison will take us back to Goldsmith or Jane Austen or to those passages in Thackeray which are most old-fashioned in style. He was a late member of Irving's generation. When he wrote he "took his pen in hand" to address "the gentle reader." All such courtly manners are now the oldest of old fashions; but when they were the vogue, Hawthorne was a master of them.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Compare Hawthorne's attitude toward Salem (p. 228) with Emerson's feeling for Concord (p. 182), Whitman's for New York (p. 331), and Howells's for Columbus (p. 398). What different kinds of influences affected these four men?

2. Read the title essay in "Mosses from an Old Manse," and "The Custom-House," which prefaces the "Scarlet Letter," for Hawthorne's analysis of his mixed feelings about his Puritan ancestors.

3. With these in mind read "Young Goodman Brown" or "Governor Endicott and the Red Cross" or the "Maypole of Merry Mount."

4. Read in the "American Note-Books," Vol. II, for April to November, 1841, his entries and his feelings about Brook Farm. Should you say that he was enthusiastic, half-hearted, or hostile in his attitude toward the experiment?

5. Glance through "Twice-Told Tales" or "Mosses from an Old Manse" and decide on the proportion of stories in which Hawthorne clearly uses a New England background.

6. Identify the passages from the "American Note-Books" cited on pages 235, 236, with the finished works for which they furnish cues.

7. Read the "House of the Seven Gables" for the light it throws on the history of the Hawthorne family in the earlier generations.

8. Compare the treatment of sin in Hawthorne with the treatment of crime in Poe (see page 175).

9. Discuss his success in any given story in connecting "a bygone time with the very present that is flitting away from us."

10. Read one or two of the earlier chapters in the "House of the Seven Gables" for observation on Hawthorne's style, particularly on the quiet play of humor in it.

11. Compare the backgrounds of Poe and Hawthorne. Which one uses real backgrounds, and which uses backgrounds of the imagination that are more convincingly real? Can you account for this in any way?

12. In answering the following questions the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters XX and XXV will be found helpful:

a. What three important novels of Hawthorne were published in 1850, 1851, 1860, respectively?

b. Hawthorne's most fruitful period of authorship is inclosed by that of four other American men of letters, only one of whom we have so far discussed. Who are they? (See Chronological Chart No. II, p. 381.)

c. How old was Hawthorne when he died? How many years after Thoreau's death? How many years after Emerson's birth was he born?

d. In the middle four years of Hawthorne's most important period of authorship what friend of his held the highest office in the country?

e. What event occurred in 1858 which would probably have averted the war with England in 1812 if it had taken place fifty years earlier?

f. With what three English writers in the decade 1850 to 1860 are you most familiar?

## CHAPTER XVII

### JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER (1807-1892)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER. Massachusetts to Virginia, First-Day Thoughts, Maud Muller, The Barefoot Boy, Skipper Ireson's Ride, The Garrison of Cape Ann, Telling the Bees, Brown of Ossawatimie, The Waiting, Laus Deo, Snow-Bound, Abraham Davenport.

Also poems from such collections as the following :

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 287-322. Ginn and Company.

BOYNTON, P. H. *American Poetry*, pp. 239-274. Charles Scribner's Sons.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 435-480. Ginn and Company.

PAGE, C. H. *Chief American Poets*, pp. 259-354. Houghton Mifflin Company.

STEDMAN, E. C. *An American Anthology*, pp. 128-142. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Can you group the twelve poems in the list above into (1) abolition and Civil War poems? (2) poems of New England tradition? (3) poems of Whittier's own New England? Can you add other poems to these lists?

Do you feel a marked difference in tone and manner between the first group and the latter two? Can you explain what it is and illustrate it by contrasting passages? Which type appeals to you more?

What is the difference in the ways Whittier points the morals of "Skipper Ireson's Ride" and "The Garrison of Cape Ann"? Which is the more artistic way of doing it?

Notice the repeated words, known as the refrain, in "Skipper Ireson's Ride" and notice the variety of ways in which the poet introduced them, thus getting the poetic value of the repetition, and at the same time avoiding monotony of effect. Notice how the same thing is done in Poe's "Raven" and in Longfellow's "Excelsior." Which seems more effective, the longer refrain in Whittier's poem or the shorter ones in Poe's and Longfellow's?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

Whittier in contrast to the other New England writers

The life of Whittier, an Essex County man

His boyhood

First contact with William Lloyd Garrison

Early discouragements

Joining an unpopular but noble cause

Whittier's journalistic antislavery verse

The reasons for its popular appeal

Its occasional sacrifice of truth to passion

Its broader and nobler expression

Whittier's verses on New England

His poems of tradition, with a moral

His personal recollections

An estimate of Whittier's poetry

Its devotion to moral themes

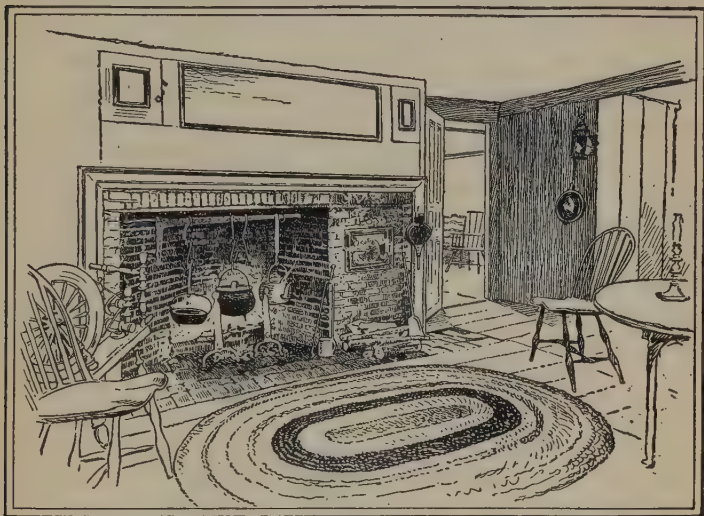
A word on its rimes

Its popular characteristics

Whittier's last years and closing fame

**Whittier in contrast to the other New England writers.** John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) stands in decided contrast, both in upbringing and in career, with the other great New England contemporaries. All the rest were college men, graduates of either Bowdoin or Harvard between 1821 and 1838, and all were familiar from youth with the world of books. Whittier was a farm boy, sprung from untutored farming stock, and in the way of formal schooling had only two terms at Haverhill Academy, paid for with his own hard earnings. He was no less retiring in disposition than the Concord group, yet he was early drawn into the antislavery conflict, and through all his middle years (from 1833 to 1865) he was an untiring man of affairs. Emerson's interest in politics ended with his admiration for the fine democracy of the Concord town meeting (see page 182); Thoreau's was registered in his spectacular protest (see page 213) at what he considered a pernicious national policy; Hawthorne's was limited to the performance of

duties in posts at the disposal of his political friends; but Whittier entered into active politics and fought hard for good men and good measures. Whittier addressed as a voter the same American to whom Emerson spoke as a thinker. Because of this his direct social influence became greater, though the verse written in behalf of reform was inferior. In spite of his



THE KITCHEN IN WHITTIER'S BIRTHPLACE, HAVERHILL

active rôle in public life, however, Whittier was very much less a man of the world than Lowell, Holmes, or Longfellow. These latter were all men of well-known families, with advantages of college training and foreign travel. They were conscious of belonging to the intellectual aristocracy, trained in good manners, and familiar with good literature. When Whittier came to Boston for his first brief experience as an editor it was not to the Boston of the charmed circle to which they and their like belonged. It was not until he had won independent fame that he became their honored friend. By birth he represented an old and stalwart element in New England life—the com-



paratively uneducated pioneers on the farms and the woodlands who made up the silent majority of the population.

**The life of Whittier, an Essex County man—his boyhood.** He was in every sense an Essex County man. He was born in 1807 in the township of Haverhill, to which his ancestors had come in 1638, on the farm they had owned since 1647, in the house they had built in 1688. He lived in the little three-mile strip between the Merrimac and the New Hampshire line for all his eighty-five years, first at his birthplace, and for the last fifty-six years at Amesbury, a few miles nearer the Atlantic. He thus became in a way an embodiment of local tradition. He felt the kind of attachment to his small part of the world that develops in a group whose memories and interests are almost wholly local, and he had a feeling for the soil that could respond to Emerson's "Earth Song," in which the earth itself says:

They called me theirs,  
Who so controlled me;  
Yet every one  
Wished to stay, and is gone,  
How am I theirs,  
If they cannot hold me,  
But I hold them?

As a consequence he described the homely beauties that surrounded him, recorded the traditions of the region, and quite unconsciously, as his rimes often prove, wrote in its dialect (see page 258). His sense of the reality of county feeling in his state is best indicated in the stirring roll-call which he makes in "Massachusetts to Virginia" (ll. 67-80).

The young poet was brought up in a time and place of splendid opportunities. In the colonial centuries, hardly more than completed when Whittier was born, the pioneer Americans had had all they could do to meet the bare problems of settlement. There still remained almost everything that had to do with the comforts and refinements of life. For any young man who could combine ambition with hard work the chance for

achievement was exhilarating,—as the Essex boys Garrison and Whittier were to prove. The religious movement of the day was closely related to these other changing conditions. It had the power of many generations behind it and the stir of the nineteenth century in it. It was old like the country and new like the period. It was dedicated to a high purpose, but its purpose was more than personal salvation; it was the salvation of Church and State, the bringing of God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven."

Whittier grew up, then, in simple and unlettered surroundings, something like those of Carlyle, much more favorable than those of Lincoln. Like many another boy of the time, when child hygiene was undreamed of, he probably suffered from insufficient clothing, unsuitable food, and overwork on the farm. At any rate he was never a strong man, though he lived to old age. The reading supplied at home was dry,—a few narratives of frontier adventure, a few religious books, "the Bible towering o'er the rest," and a number of biographies:

The Lives of Franklin and of Penn,  
Of Fox and Scott, all worthy men.  
The Lives of Pope, of Young, and Prior,  
Of Milton, Addison and Dyer;  
Of Doddridge, Fenelon and Gray,  
Armstrong, Akenside and Gay.  
The Life of Burroughs, too, I've read,  
As big a rogue as e'er was made;  
And Tufts, who, I will be civil,  
Was worse than an incarnate devil.

Poetry came to Whittier through the chance visit of a Yankee gypsy, "'a pawky auld Carle' of a wandering Scotchman. To him I owe my first introduction to the songs of Burns. After eating his bread and cheese and drinking his mug of cider he gave us Bonny Doon, Highland Mary, and Auld Lang Syne." When the boy was fourteen his first schoolmaster, Joshua Coffin, brought a volume of Burns one day to the house and

was persuaded to leave it for a while as a loan. With that closer introduction to the world of poetry Whittier's own verse-writing began.

**First contact with William Lloyd Garrison.** At eighteen his first poem was printed. It was an imitation of Moore, "The Exile's Departure," which was sent without his knowledge to



JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER AT THE  
AGE OF TWENTY-THREE

William Lloyd Garrison's *Free Press* at Newburyport and published in June, 1826. The young editor, himself only twenty-one, was greatly impressed by the promise of these lines and hunted up the author, coming to the farm just when the embarrassed youth was hunting out a stolen hen's nest under the barn. Garrison's interest was of the greatest importance. Whittier was encouraged to write the nearly one hundred pieces of verse which appeared in the *Haverhill Gazette* in 1827

and 1828, and to earn by shoemaking the money necessary for his first summer term in the new Haverhill Academy in 1827. In this term he was able to prepare himself for a place as teacher in a country school, and in the next winter he earned funds enough to take him for another term the next year, and then, in 1828, through the continuing influence of Garrison, he was given his first position as an editor, on the *American Manufacturer* in Boston. He was still a simple country boy, and his published address, "to the young mechanics of New England," suggests that he had not been encouraged to forget this fact during his first four months in town.

He has felt, in common with you all, the injustice of that illiberal feeling, which has been manifested toward mechanics by the wealthy and arrogant of other classes. He has felt his cheeks burn, and his pulse quicken, when witnessing the open, undisguised contempt with which his friends have been received—not from any defect in their moral character, their minds, or their persons, but simply because they depended upon their own exertions for their means of existence, and upon their own industry and talents for a passport to public favor.

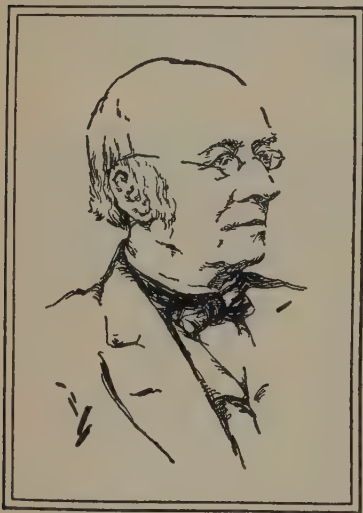
He held his post here only from January to August, 1829, when he was summoned home by his father's illness. Editorship of the *Haverhill Gazette* followed for the first half of 1830, when he was called to the *New England Review* in Hartford, Connecticut. This position he occupied with one interruption until the end of 1831, at which time he took his leave of journalism.

**Early discouragements.** He was twenty-four years old—in the restless period between youth and real manhood. He had known little but hardship and had come out of it with impaired health. There was little to cheer him in the tragic career of Burns, in the almost desperate enthusiasm of Garrison, or in the worldly wisdom of Byron to which he had lately become subject. To cap all he had been crossed in love. He could not even have the grim comfort of realizing that he was passing through a youthful phase when he wrote to a friend:

Disappointment in a thousand ways has gone over my heart, and left it dust. Yet I still look forward with high anticipations. I have placed the goal of my ambitions high—but with the blessing of God it shall be reached. The world has at last breathed into my bosom a portion of its own bitterness, and I now feel as if I would wrestle manfully in the strife of men. If my life is spared, the world shall know me in a loftier capacity than *as a writer of rhymes*. There—is not that boasting?—But I have said it with a strong pulse and a swelling heart, and I shall strive to realize it.

This temporary abandonment of poetry was after all only an evidence of his regard for it. With all the other young writers of his day he was hoping for new achievement in

American literature and wondering in the back of his mind if he were not to be a contributor to it. At that moment Bryant had turned to journalism, the New England group were not yet writing, and the call of politics was loud. "There was nowhere in America a writer of verse with more immediate promise



WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

than Whittier, [yet] he was a sick man in the old house at the back of Job's Hill, disgusted with poetry and planning how he could best get to Congress."

**Joining an unpopular but noble cause.** Once more Garrison's influence was to determine him. The general inclination toward reform had stirred the great abolitionist<sup>1</sup> to the establishment of the *Liberator*, and when he declared, "I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—**AND I WILL BE HEARD,**" he found a

natural ally in Whittier. The great step came in 1833 with the poet's publication at his own expense of the pamphlet "Justice and Expediency," and with his share in the founding of the American Antislavery Society. In the years to come he said, "I set a higher value on my name as appended to the Antislavery Declaration of 1833 than on the title-page of any book." It was the deepest test of courage. In the first place it meant that a sensitive young poet who had already felt the injustice of the conservative classes must lay himself open to

<sup>1</sup>The abolitionist was the extremest foe of slavery, who recognized no right to its continuation and wished to do away with it at once and by force if necessary. He was the radical (see page 34) among the opponents of slavery.



their contempt and ridicule. It was a bitter time to do this, for never was a day when there were so many freakish reforms and reformers. Emerson's derisive list, "Madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-Day-Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians and Philosophers," shows how the general idea of reform had been cheapened and discredited. But the adoption of the abolition cause involved far more than ridicule—nothing less than the completest disapproval of most good citizens. Considered in the large, lawyers and clergymen are conservatives by profession, deeply committed to the past; and here was slavery sanctioned in the law and the gospel. The prosperous merchant and banker are never very eager for a change from the conditions which have made their prosperity possible; and here was a whole system, from the plantations of the South to the financial houses of New York and Boston erected on a foundation of slave labor. According to Emerson, cotton thread held the Union together. Men might devote their lives to the substitution of hooks and eyes for buttons or to the adoption of a vegetarian diet and get their pay in laughter, but when they threatened to disturb the business world they were pelted and hated and cursed. All this Whittier foresaw when he followed his own counsel of later years, "My lad, if thou wouldst win success, join thyself to some unpopular but noble cause." The history of his part in the abolition movement does not belong to such a chapter as this except for a record of how he used his pen for the good of the cause, and for a comment on the kind of poetry that was bound to result from such use.

**Whittier's journalistic antislavery verse.** Between 1831 and 1833 Whittier had become actively interested in politics; indeed, had he been a few months older in the autumn of 1832, it is possible that he might have been elected to Congress as a compromise candidate when Caleb Cushing was unable to secure the seat for himself, though strong enough to prevent the choice of an opponent. The young poet had thus learned

a good deal about the value of public opinion and about the power of publicity in molding and wielding it. When the American Antislavery Society was formed, he had at his hand a great megaphone that could project his voice to the far districts of the country. As a writer of popular verse he was gifted with what in an orator would be a natural speaking voice. His convictions were deep and sincere, he had an easy command of simple rhythms, and he was used to thinking and speaking in the language of the people. He was in no danger of falling into learned subtlety. So, like Philip Freneau, his greatest American forerunner in this field (see page 81-92), he spoke again and again and always with telling effect.

**The reasons for its popular appeal.** As a good journalist and rhetorician he made his issues plain and simple—much simpler in fact than they really were, avoiding embarrassing qualifications. He appealed to the Northerners as a people solidly opposed to human bondage, and not as a half-hearted and divided group, which they were in fact. In a generation when the local state pride was far stronger than it is now, he assumed that Massachusetts was highly virtuous while he stirred up resentment against Virginia and South Carolina. With the memories of the Revolution refreshed by a series of recent semicentennials, he used the conventional phrases of protest against tyranny; the antislavery verses resound with allusions to chains, fetters, yokes, rods, manacles, and gyves, with Scriptural phrases and with scorn for treachery to the principles of freedom. In the opening lines of "The Crisis" he was skillfully suggestive by his paraphrase of the missionary hymn "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," and in the "Letter from a Missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Kansas to a Distinguished Politician" he poured out his contempt on the use of the Scriptures in defense of slavery.

"Go it, old hoss!" they cried, and cursed the niggers—  
Fulfilling thus the word of prophecy,  
"Cursed be Canaan."

**Its occasional sacrifice of truth to passion.** All this was justifiable, though it frequently was anything but high art. At times, however, the heat of passion led Whittier to write lines for which there was little or no excuse. His disappointment at Webster's famous "Seventh of March" compromise speech in 1850 led him to the bitter reproach of "Ichabod." Later he regretted this bitterness, which he had shared with most of the North, and made his atonement with "The Lost Occasion." The lowest level of his war verse is reached in the most familiar "Barbara Frietchie." This has all the traits that are usually to be found in popular favorites. It is conventional in form, easily intelligible, a story built around picturesque tableaux and capped with an applied moral. The only charge that can be fairly brought against it is, however, a fundamental one—that it is altogether false to the facts. The middle third of the poem, that has to do definitely with Stonewall Jackson, is partly libelous and partly ridiculous. Jackson was an honest and devoted man, but he is represented as coming through the town like a stock-melodrama villain, blushing with remorse at the challenge of Barbara and capping the climax with a burst of cheap and unsoldierly rhetoric. No doubt it expressed at the moment what the passions of war could lead even a gentle Quaker to believe; no doubt also it was good war journalism; but granting these concessions, it stands as an unhappy proof of the depths to which noble talents can be degraded in the times that try men's souls.

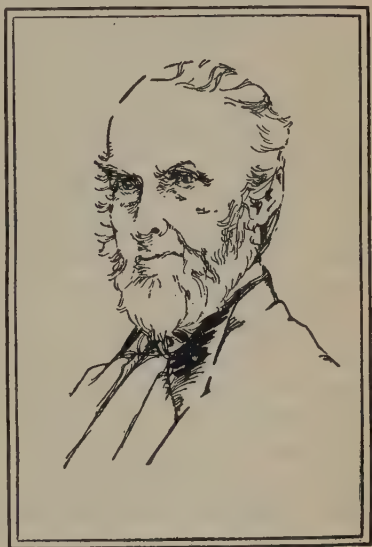
**Its broader and nobler expression.** "The Waiting," a poem of 1862, is in a loftier vein. It is a lament that he could do so little in behalf of an ideal cause. As a really great lyric should be, it is both personal and general in its application. It expresses the grief of the enfeebled and aging poet that he could not join "the shining ones with plumes of snow" in the good fight; and in its reference to "the harder task of standing still" it alludes not only to his resignation at the moment but also to the patient policy which in former years had made the extremest abolitionists lose patience with him. It also must

have been a consolation to thousands who have been confronted by duties they could not perform; while at the same time in a broader way it expresses the faith of "Ulysses" and "Abt Vogler," of "In Memoriam" and "Saul" and "Asolando," that "good but wished with God is done."

**Whittier's verses on New England.** His poems of tradition, with a moral. Like Freneau (see pages 82-87), but to a more marked degree, Whittier was most popular at first for his newspaper poems of controversy, though his most permanent works have nothing to do with strife. In these he followed the example of Burns, who inspired his first literary passion, in writing simple lyrics and narratives of his own countryside. These included many of the legends of Boston, like "Cassandra Southwick"; of Hartford, like "Abraham Davenport"; or of his beloved district north of Boston, like "The Wreck of Rivermouth," "The Garrison of Cape Ann," and "Skipper Ireson's Ride." As a rule he was not inclined to tell stories without some clear moral implication, and all too often he expounded this implication, sermonwise, at the end. Thus he tells with dignity and fine effect the story of the Indian specters of Cape Ann, who were finally driven away by the prayers of the devout garrison after repeated volleys from their musketry had failed. In eighty lines the tale is told; an added stanza calls attention to the fact that there is a moral in the ancient fiction; and two more in a sort of sub-postscript carefully explain what it is. "Skipper Ireson," the best of Whittier's ballads, is no less moralistic, but is done with more art, for the point is developed within the story instead of being tacked on after it.

**His personal recollections.** In poems such as "Hampton Beach," "The Lakeside," "The Last Walk in Autumn," and "At Eventide" Whittier pictures the countryside in which he grew up; and in a generous succession—from "Memories," of 1841, to "In School-Days," of nearly thirty years later—he takes his readers along the borderlands of his own life. Pre-eminent among his recollections of persons and places is "Snow-Bound." The snowstorm, which Emerson described for

itself alone, Whittier adopted as the background for a winter idyl. The "Flemish pictures of old days" which he drew of his Haverhill homestead were almost as faithful as photographs, but their virtue lies not so much in the fact that they are true to a given set of conditions as that they are true to the rural life of Whittier's New England—just as pictures in "The Cotter's Saturday Night" are true to the Scotland of Burns, and pictures of "The Deserted Village" to the landlord-ridden Ireland of Goldsmith. And to the attentive reader the contrasts between the peasant life of Great Britain and the nearest thing to it that can be found in America are witnesses to the virtues of a democracy. In this idyl, written with "intimate knowledge and delight," Whittier combined truth and beauty as in few other of his poems.



JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

In his later years

**An estimate of Whittier's poetry.** For brief criticism of

Whittier's poetry there are no better passages than his own "Proem" to the collected poems of 1849 and the comment in Lowell's "Fable for Critics" of 1848. Whittier acknowledges the lack in his lines of "mystic beauty, dreamy grace" or of searching analysis of emotion; Lowell confirms the judgment with

Let his mind once get head in its favorite direction  
And the torrent of verse bursts the dams of reflection,  
While, borne with the rush of his metre along,  
The poet may chance to go right or go wrong,  
Content with the whirl and delirium of song.



**Its devotion to moral themes.** Whittier lays his best gifts on the shrine of freedom with an expression of his love for mankind and his hearty hatred of all forms of oppression, and Lowell properly qualifies the value of these gifts with the statement that the Quaker's fervor has sometimes dulled him to the distinction between "simple excitement and pure inspiration." Whittier half apologizes for the harshness and rigor of the rhythms which beat "Labor's hurried time, or Duty's rugged march," but Lowell says that at his best the reformer-poet has written unsurpassable lyrics. And both pronounce judgments on his rimes which have been conventionally repeated by most of the later critics who have commented on them at all.

**A word on its rimes.** Many of Whittier's apparently false rimes,<sup>1</sup> however,—as the author of the "Biglow Papers" should have recognized—are perfect if uttered according to the pronunciation of his district. Lowell passes for an expert in the New England dialect when he writes, "This heth my faithful shepherd ben," but Whittier is derided for allowing the same final verb to rime with "Of all sad words of tongue or pen." Yet the sole difference is that one recognized the pronunciation in his spelling and the other took it for granted. If Whittier had employed Lowell's method, in transcribing "Barbara Frietchie" for example, he would have written,

Quick, as it fell, from the broken sta'af  
 Dame Barbara snatched the silken sca'af,

and he would have concluded with

Peace and odda and beauty drawr  
 Reound thy symbol of light and lawr;  
 And evva the stahs above look deown  
 On thy stahs below in Frederick teown!

<sup>1</sup> False rime is the technical name for a defective rime. It occurs in paired words both differently spelled and pronounced, as in the vowel differences in *wood*, *rude*, or the consonant differences in *nice*, *skies*, or in paired words spelled alike but pronounced differently, as in *beat*, *great*. There is some proportion of these in the work of every poet.

For the *ou* sounds belong to Essex County, and all the others to Boston and even to hallowed Cambridge. False rimes Whittier wrote in abundance, but by no means all of the apparently bad ones should be condemned at first glance.

**Its popular characteristics.** Until the publication of "Snow-Bound" in 1866 Whittier's verse, though widely circulated, had brought him in but little money return. For twenty years, he later recalled, he had been given the cold shoulder by editors and publishers; but as the war prejudices began to subside they could no longer afford to reject his manuscripts, for these had in them the characteristics of "fireside favorites," the only sort of poetry that is always certain of big sales. (1) In the first place, their form is simple; common words and short sentences are cast in conventional rhythms with frequent rime. They are therefore easy to commit to memory. (2) In content they are easy to understand. (3) More often than not they are either narratives, like the war ballads and the New England chronicles, or strung on a narrative thread, like "Snow-Bound." (4) Almost always they contain vivid pictures; mention of "Skipper Ireson" or "Telling the Bees" or "The Huskers" or "Maud Muller" recalls tableaux first and then the ideas connected with them. (5) And, finally, they contain the applied moral which the immature or the unliterary mind dearly loves. It is not difficult to recall popular favorites which do not include all of these traits, but beyond doubt the great majority of poems that are beloved by the multitude contain most if not all of them. When, in addition to these features, poems are clearly and permanently true to life and to the best there is in life, their vogue is likely to be lasting as well as widespread. People cherish them as they do the melodies to which some of them are fortunately set, or as they do certain bits from Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Schubert which belong to the repertory of every pianola or talking-machine. On the other hand, the intricate beauties of Browning and Wagner or the severity of Milton and Brahms will always appeal to a limited public.

Whittier's last years and closing fame. The last third of Whittier's life brought him the rewards he had earned and the serenity he deserved. He lived quietly at Amesbury under his own roof or with his cousins at Danvers close by. He was on friendly terms with the eminent literary men and women of his day. A long continuation of ill health from boyhood on had



WHITTIER'S HOME IN AMESBURY

developed him into a fragile, gentle old man, a little shy and reticent and to all appearances quite without the fighting powers which he had displayed when there was need for them. If one chooses to recall Whittier from a single portrait, it should be from one taken in his middle rather than in his later life, for the earlier ones are far more rugged.

As the years passed they were marked by a succession of public tributes. At seventy the most famous of the annual "*Atlantic Monthly* dinners" was arranged in his honor. At eighty his home state officially celebrated his birthday. The anniversaries that followed were recognized in the public schools of many states; and so with "honor, love, obedience, troops of friends" he came to the end in 1892.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Should Whittier's lack of a college education be considered a handicap to him as a poet? List at least five other eminent American authors who were not college-trained.

2. Read the poems by Whittier the titles of which suggest local treatment of Essex County life and scenes.

3. Compare the quotation on page 251 with the opening paragraphs of the chapter on "The Brahmin Caste" in Holmes's "Elsie Venner" (see page 309). The one accounts for the other.

4. Read Emerson's essay on "The New England Reformers," remembering that Whittier was one of them. Read also the opening derisive paragraph of Lowell's essay on "Thoreau."

5. In Whittier's controversial poetry note the three different levels of "Barbara Frietchie," "Expostulation," and "The Waiting," and pick out other poems which may fairly be classed with one or the other of these.

6. Read "Snow-Bound," and the "Cotter's Saturday Night" by Burns. What features of the life described in the two poems are common to all localities, and what are peculiar to old Scotland or to old New England?

7. Is there a standard of pronunciation in this country today? What sections have marked pronunciations of their own? Are these pronunciations of specific words or of sounds common to all words in which they occur? Do they relate to the pronunciation of vowels or of consonants? What is to be said in support of abiding by the best speech of one's own region?

8. In what respect could pronunciation in the United States be generally improved?

9. Make up a short list, in the course of class discussion, of from six to ten widely popular poems, and decide how generally the five characteristics mentioned on page 259 are to be found in them.

10. In answering the following questions use may profitably be made of the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters XX and XXV:

a. Between 1850 and 1860 what two monthly magazines that have high standing among American magazines of today were established? Which one was first?

b. What three conspicuous American authors were abroad during part of this ten years?

c. From all the writings of this decade name the five that seem to you the most important.

d. From 1849 to 1859 who of the people we have already dealt with died?

e. Name three works published on the other side of the Atlantic in the year that "Snow-Bound" was published.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1807-1882)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW. A Psalm of Life, The Village Blacksmith, The Wreck of the Hesperus, Excelsior, Serenade, The Day is Done, The Bridge, The Old Clock on the Stairs, The Arrow and the Song, Seaweed, Birds of Passage, from *Evangeline*, from *The Song of Hiawatha*, The Birds of Killingworth, The Children's Hour.

Also poems from such collections as the following :

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 323-376. Ginn and Company.

BOYNTON, P. H. *American Poetry*, pp. 366-420. Charles Scribner's Sons.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 366-435. Ginn and Company.

PAGE, C. H. *Chief American Poets*, pp. 102-258. Houghton Mifflin Company.

STEDMAN, E. C. *An American Anthology*, pp. 111-126. Houghton Mifflin Company.

In reading "Hiawatha" the eye is caught on almost every page by groups of lines beginning with the same words. What is the rhetorical name ("——— construction") for these "frequent repetitions," as Longfellow calls them in the poem? Compose some short passages in the same way on your daily school experience.


Note Longfellow's characterizations of the Puritans in the poems mentioned on pages 274, 275 and compare these with Hawthorne's characterizations (see pages 228, 229).

What is the moral of "The Birds of Killingworth"? Does the presence of the moral spoil the story? Is the story interesting regardless of the moral?

Read "Prelude," "The Day is Done," "Seaweed," and "Birds of Passage" (the single poem, not the group) for Longfellow's comments on the poet and the poetic art.



## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Longfellow and the Cambridge group
  - The formative life of Longfellow
    - College and first travels abroad
    - Two professorships and further travel
  - Foreign influence in the early poems
    - The "psalms"
    - The translations
    - The ballads and the other lyrics
    - The "Poems on Slavery"
  - The turn to American themes
    - The popularity of "Evangeline"
    - "Hiawatha"
      - The appeal to children as a series of stories
      - The appeal to mature readers as an epic
      - The fitness of form to content
    - The New England themes
  - The later years of Longfellow
    - Broadening and deepening of his work
    - His popularity
    - His limitations
- 

**Longfellow and the Cambridge group.** It is a common practice to mention Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) as a member of "the Cambridge group," with the suggestion that there was some such agreement in point of view as there was between the men who lived and wrote in Concord. Yet there was no such oneness of mind among Longfellow, Lowell, and Holmes as among Emerson and his younger associates. Between Longfellow and Lowell the real point of contact was their scholarship, and particularly their enthusiasm for the writings of Dante; Lowell and Holmes were friendly but not intimate. The Cambridge men, to be sure, were different from the men of Concord. The fathers of all three were professional gentlemen of some distinction; all the poets were college-bred, ripened by residence abroad, and holders of professorships in Harvard College. All enjoyed and deserved social position as

members of the "Brahmin caste," all were usually to be found at the celebrated Saturday Club luncheons, and all contributed to the early and lasting fame of the *Atlantic Monthly*. But as far as their deeper interests in life were concerned they went their several ways. Lowell was a representative first of New England and the North, and later of the country as a whole;



LONGFELLOW'S HOME IN PORTLAND, MAINE

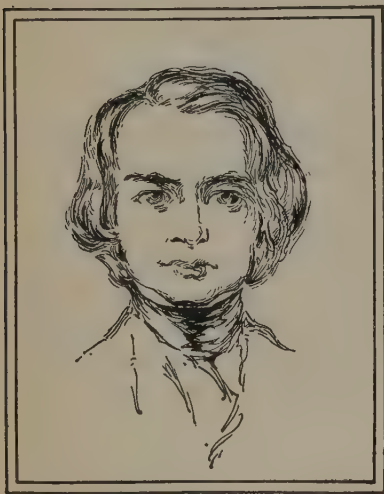
Holmes belonged far more to Boston than to the college town across the Charles, so that Longfellow, the only one of the three not born there, was most closely associated with Cambridge, less clearly allied with any other part of the world. In the literary vista, therefore, the local relationship should not loom too large. Longfellow should be considered as belonging to the same

decades with Poe and Hawthorne; his greatest productive period was at its height when Poe was living, and was over before the death of Hawthorne, and his attitude toward life was much like theirs. Lowell, in contrast, was a factor in the issues leading into and out of the Civil War, and Holmes's richest years bridged the sixties.

The formative life of Longfellow—college and first travels abroad. Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine, in 1807, the second of eight children. The matters of conventional record are that on his mother's side he was descended from John and Priscilla Alden, and that his father was a lawyer with a good practice and a modestly well-equipped library. Able tutoring fitted the boy to enter as a sophomore in Bowdoin, in the class

with Hawthorne, who was three years older. For a coming man of letters his student record was exceptionally good. Instead of being unsettled by vague dreams, he was stirred by a very definite ambition for success as an author. His whole soul, he wrote in a letter from college, burned most ardently for it, and every earthly thought centered in it. Then, just at the time when he was making up his mind to become a lawyer, in order not to be, like Goldsmith, "equally irreclaimable from poetry and poverty," the trustees of Bowdoin, following the example of Harvard, established a professorship of modern languages, offered it to Longfellow, and set as a condition that he should prepare himself by study abroad. In the three years from 1826 to 1829 his mastering of French, Italian, and Spanish was perhaps less important than his breathing the cultural atmosphere of the Old World. Life in America up to the nineteenth century had been a busy and self-centered experience. The chief consciousness of England and Europe had been a consciousness of other governments and of unsympathetic and conflicting loyalties (see page 100); but now America was beginning to think not only of how other peoples were ruled but also of how they lived and what they were thinking about. Longfellow had little to say of foreign unfriendliness, which was still disturbing Irving and Cooper and Bryant (see pages 111, 138). In preparing to teach foreign languages and literatures he yielded to the spell of their richly picturesque traditions, and his first work, "Outre-Mer" (1833), was an effort to expound these to his countrymen. This, too, Irving and Cooper had done, and from now on the refrain was to be taken up by most of the widely-read American writers. A short list of such works will include Longfellow's "Hyperion" (1839), Mrs. Stowe's "Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands" (1854), Emerson's "English Traits" (1856), Bryant's "Letters from Spain and Other Countries" (1859), Hawthorne's "Our Old Home" (1863), Howells's "Venetian Life" (1866), Mark Twain's "Innocents Abroad" (1869), and so on down to and beyond Holmes's "Our Hundred Days in Europe" (1887).

Two professorships and further travel. As an impressionable young American he fell into the sentimental tone of the period (see page 115) and wrote characteristically to his mother: "I look forward to the distant day of our meeting until my heart swells into my throat and tears into my eyes. I cannot help thinking that it is a pardonable weakness." He



HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW  
AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-FIVE

was so absorbed by all he was seeing and learning that he wrote no verse, letting the days go by until he concluded, with the overwhelming seriousness of budding manhood, that his poetic career was finished. As a matter of fact, he was just adding to his native American feeling a sense of the glamor of Old World civilization, and was on the way toward combining the two as poet and professor. Returning to his old college he taught there until in 1836 he was invited to succeed Professor George

Ticknor at Harvard, again with the condition—implied if not imposed—that he go abroad for study. On his second sojourn he extended his knowledge to the Germanic languages, mastering them as thoroughly as he had French, Spanish, and Italian. In the end he is said to have had a fluent speaking control of eight tongues, with the power to "get along" in six more, and to read yet another six. Until 1854 he was at work in Harvard College, giving no little instruction, securing all his assistants, and personally supervising their teaching. It was an irksome routine, against which he began to rebel many years before he shook himself free. "It is too much to do for one's daily bread,

when one can live on so little," he wrote in 1839. "I must learn to give up superfluous things and devote myself wholly to literature." And in the same year he referred in another letter to "poetic dreams shaded by French irregular verbs." If the distractions of his professorship had actually prevented all writing, he would doubtless not have held it eighteen years, for in spite of handicaps his output was fairly steady throughout, and his most richly productive period (1847-1863) half overlapped his Harvard service. So little modern-language teaching had been done up to this time that he actually had to work up his own methods and write his own textbooks. Yet he managed to write two books of travel, "Outre-Mer" and "Hyperion"; a novel, "Kavanagh"; and nine volumes of poetry during his professorship.

**Foreign influence in the early poems—the "psalms."** The most important of his early poems were a group of "psalms." Of these, of course, "A Psalm of Life" is best known. Like all the others of its sort it has certain traits that are sure to endear it to the multitude (see page 259). It is in a conventional meter often used in simple lyrics and in religious poetry; it is easy to understand; it is constructed around one vivid picture; and it conveys a wholesome moral lesson. It is a general counsel to industry and fortitude. Its message is formulated in a closing stanza of "The Light of Stars,"

And thou, too, whosoe'er thou art,  
That readest this brief psalm,  
As one by one thy hopes depart,  
Be resolute and calm,

and its "act in the living Present" is echoed in the daily achievement of the village blacksmith.

**The translations.** Longfellow's work as a translator began early and continued throughout his career; but it is interesting to see that in the earlier efforts a sober moral note prevails, whereas many of the later translations are marked by simple charm and some by sheer frivolity. The "Coplas de Don Jorge



Manrique" is a transparently veiled sermon on the vanity of human wishes; others from the Spanish are on "The Good Shepherd" and "The Image of God," and from Dante on "The Celestial Pilot" and "The Terrestrial Paradise"; there is an Anglo-Saxon passage on "The Grave," and a fragment from a German ballad in which a rather coarse discussion of "The Happiest Land" is interrupted by the landlord's daughter, who points to heaven and says,

. . . "Ye may no more contend,—  
There lies the happiest land!"

**The ballads and the other lyrics.** In January, 1840, the poet wrote to his friend George Greene,

I have broken ground in a new field; namely, ballads; beginning with the "Wreck of the Schooner Hesperus" on the reef of Norman's Woe . . . I think I shall write more. The *national ballad* is a virgin soil here in New England; and there are great materials. Besides, I have a great notion of working on the *people's* feelings.


In 1842, consequently, there appeared his "Ballads and Other Poems." Longfellow had first intended naming the volume from the opening ballad, "The Skeleton in Armor," but the collection grew in number until this poem was overbalanced by the weight of the whole, and until—which is more significant—the native ballads were crowded by the introduction of poems from the German and Swedish and Danish. The change of plan, though slight, suggests what was taking place in Longfellow's development. He inclined, in the fashion of his day, to deal with American subject matter, but he was full of the spirit and content of European literature, which was unknown to his countrymen. Some years were to pass before he could hold his gaze away from "outré-mer." Another letter to George Greene shows how he was weighing the matter in his mind:

A national literature is the expression of national character and thought; and as our character and modes of thought do not differ

essentially from those of England, our literature cannot. Vast fields, lakes and prairies cannot make great poets. They are but the scenery of the play, and have much less to do with the poetic character than has been imagined. . . . I do not think a "Poet's Convention" would help the matter. In fact the matter needs no helping.

"Excelsior" is a complete poetic illustration of this idea. There is nothing either American or un-American in the aspiration of youth. Longfellow therefore "staged" the ballad in the Alps, partly because the Alps doubtless first occurred to mind and partly because in America no mountain heights were topped by the symbolic monastery from which the traveler could be found still aspiring in death. Again, lyrics like "The Day is Done," "The Old Clock on the Stairs," and "The Arrow and the Song" belong to no particular time or place, but are simply meditative moments in the life of any thoughtful man. And, finally, "The Bridge" is a representative combination of native and foreign, direct and derived, material. The bridge with wooden piers used to stand exactly as described over the Charles River between Boston and Cambridge. It was so near the ocean that the tides swept back and forth under it as they do not and could not under any bridge in Rome or in Paris or on the German Rhine. Yet in the second stanza the likeness of the moonlight to "a golden goblet falling and sinking into the sea" is quite evidently an allusion to a picture in Schiller's "König in Thule," a literary allusion but not a false one, for the moonlight might well look the same on the tide-tossed Charles as on the streaming Rhine. In his "Seaweed" Longfellow seems to have been half explaining and, if need were, half defending such poetic processes:

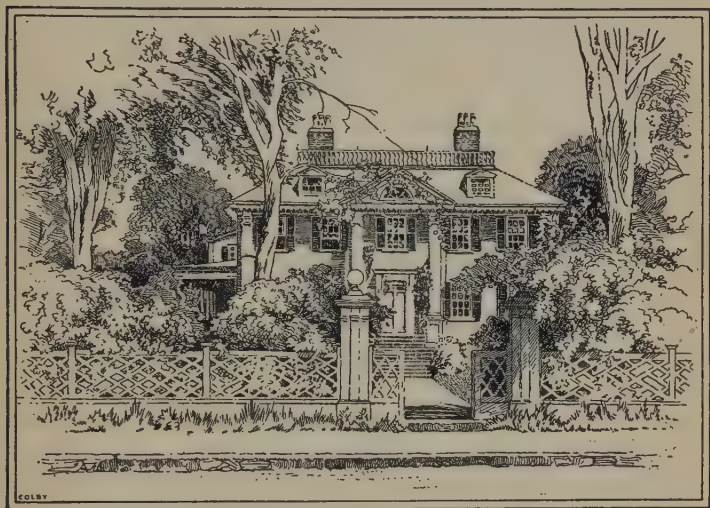
So when storms of wild emotion  
Strike the ocean  
Of the poet's soul, erelong  
From each cave and rocky fastness,  
In its vastness,  
Floats some fragment of a song.



The "Poems on Slavery." The one point to accept with caution from all Longfellow's poems of self-analysis is the oft-recurring reference to heroic strife. Whatever heroism he felt or displayed "in the world's broad field of battle" was expressed in patient strength rather than in active fighting. The real Longfellow learned "to labor and to wait"; if wild emotion ever struck the ocean of his soul he controlled himself until the tumult subsided. The finest of all his lyrics, "Victor and Vanquished," is far more thrilling than any of his actions. The "Poems on Slavery," for example, bear witness only to the passive courage of his convictions. In 1842 it was no small matter to come out clearly in public opposition to human bondage (see page 253). Longfellow did not hesitate to risk his growing popularity by issuing this little volume. He was, and he continued to be, the devoted friend of such a foe of slavery as Charles Sumner. Yet his antislavery heroism began and ended with these seven poems, and their value lay more in the bare fact that he had written them than in any special appeal, for they were all more or less vague and fanciful.

The turn to American themes—the popularity of "Evangeline." The period from 1847 to 1863 was, all things considered, quite the most fruitful for Longfellow. His work as a whole contains no five other titles to rival "Evangeline" (1847), "The Song of Hiawatha" (1855), "The Courtship of Miles Standish" (1858), "The New England Tragedies" (first form, 1860), and "Tales of a Wayside Inn" (1863). Thus, although he by no means turned his back on Europe and the thoughts of Europe, he came at last and altogether naturally to the treatment of American legends and scenes. The immediate success of "Evangeline" (for five thousand copies were sold within two months) is easy to understand. The material was fresh and the story was lovely. Longfellow's reading public, accustomed to certain charms and qualities in his work, found these no less attractively displayed in the long story than in his brief lyrics. The village scene at the start, the dramatic episode of the separation, the long vista of Amer-

ican scenes presented in *Evangeline's* vain search, and the final rounding out of the story plot, all belong to a "good seller"; and as it happened there was in America in 1847 no very widely popular novelist. The field belonged to the author of "*Evangeline*" even more completely than a half century earlier it had belonged to the author of "*Marmion*," on the other side of the sea.



LONGFELLOW'S HOUSE, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

"*Hiawatha*." In the journal of 1849 appears the entry, "And now I hope to try a loftier strain, the sublimer Song whose broken melodies have for so many years breathed through my soul in the better hours of life." This was a reference to "*The Golden Legend*," which appeared in 1851, and which was in the end to become part of "*Christus*," not completed until 1872. This was the most ambitious and least effective of all his undertakings. It was too scholastic for the public; it was not a fit approach to the feelings of "the people," whom in 1840 he had resolved to stir. In 1854 Longfellow entered in the journal, "I have at length hit upon a plan for a poem on

the American Indians, which seems to me the right one and the only." This plan was to do with the traditions of the red man what Malory had done, and what Tennyson in the "Idylls of the King" was soon to do, with the Arthurian story. H. R. Schoolcraft's Indian researches put the material into his hands, and the Finnish epic "Kalevala" suggested a suitable meter. It appeared as "Hiawatha" in 1855 and was demanded by the public in repeated editions.

**The appeal to children as a series of stories.** "Hiawatha" has a double certainty of wide and lasting fame in the fact that it appeals to young and old in different ways. It appeals to children because it is made up of a succession of picturesque stories of action. Their lack of plots is no defect to the youthful reader,—nothing could be more plotless than the various parts of "Gulliver's Travels,"—and, on the other hand, few children detect or care for the scheme underlying them as a whole. They are as definite and vivid as "Gulliver" or as "Pilgrim's Progress." Furthermore, they deal with human types which belong to all romantic legend: the hero, the heroine, the sweet singer or artist, the strong man or primitive force, the mischief-maker or the comic spirit,—any child will recognize them here as he will under other names in the story of Robin Hood.

**The appeal to mature readers as an epic.** Unhappily the average grown-up who has read "Hiawatha" in early life assumes that he has advanced beyond it, that he can put it away with other childish things, not realizing how much more than meets the eye resides within its lines. Moreover, some men and women who do attempt a second reading are dissatisfied because their minds have stopped between childhood and maturity, stunted by too heavy a diet on obvious fiction and the daily newspaper. For the later reading of "Hiawatha" demands the sort of mind that can cope with "Paradise Lost" or "Sartor Resartus" or "In Memoriam" or the classics which are quite beyond the child. The really mature reader appreciates that the legends and the ballads of a people are never



quite limited to their outward meaning, and that, whoever may happen to be the hero, it is the people who are represented through him. So the epic note is there for the reader who can hear it. A peace is declared among *the warring tribes*; Hiawatha is sent by Mudjekeewis back to live and toil *among his people*; he is commended by Mondamin because he prays "For advantage *of the nations*"; he fights the pestilence to save *the people*; he divides his trophies of battle with them; and he departs when the advent of the white man marks the *doom of the Indian race*. And so the planning of the whole story is a series of chapters in folk history, tracing the Indian chronicle through the stages that all people have traversed, from the nomad life of hunting and fishing to primitive agriculture and community life; thus come song and festival, a common religion and a common fund of legend, and finally, in the tragic life of this people, come the decline of strength, in the death of Kwasind, the passing of song with Chibiabos, and the departure of national heroism as Hiawatha is lost to view,

In the glory of the sunset,  
In the purple mists of evening.

It is no mean achievement to write a children's classic, but the enduring fact about "Hiawatha" is that it is a genuine epic as well.

**The fitness of form to content.** No other poem of Longfellow's is so well adjusted in form and content. The fact of first importance is not that Longfellow borrowed the measure from a Finnish epic but that the primitive epic form is perfect because it is the natural, unstudied way of telling a primitive story. The forms of literature that go back nearest to the people in their origins are simple in rhythm and built up of parallel repetitions. This marks a distinction between the epics about nations written in a later age, such as the *Iliad* and the *Æneid* and the works of Milton, and the epics of early and unknown authorship, such as the "Nibelungenlied" and "Beowulf." It was Longfellow's gift to combine the old mate-

rial with a fittingly primitive measure, joining, as only poet and scholar could,

. . . legends and traditions  
With the odors of the forest,  
With the dew and damp of meadows,  
With the curling smoke of wigwams,  
With the rushing of great rivers,  
With their frequent repetitions,  
And their wild reverberations,  
As of thunder in the mountains.

**The New England themes.** With "The Courtship of Miles Standish" Longfellow returned to New England and told his first long story of his own district and of his own immediate people. Both "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha" were narratives that ended with themselves. The glory of the Acadians and of the Indians was departed. But "Miles Standish" was like the "New England Tragedies" in dealing with a people who were very much alive. For the early Puritan, Longfellow felt a thorough respect, though it was not untinged with humor. For his self-righteousness and his arid lack of feeling for beauty the poet showed an amused contempt, but for the solid qualities of rectitude and abiding persistence he was quite ready to acknowledge his admiration. There is a pleasant personal application in this story which he who runs is likely to overlook. Miles Standish was a worthy man, says Longfellow; he was stalwart, vigorous, practical, and when put to the test he was magnanimous too. But he was sadly one-sided. It was not enough to be like his own howitzer,

Steady, straightforward, and strong, with irresistible logic,  
Orthodox, flashing conviction right into the hearts of the heathen.

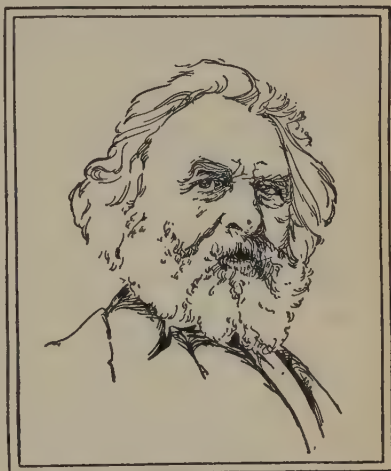
He was of the sort who banished the birds of Killingworth with costly consequence. The worthier character was John Alden,—“my ancestor,”—who was like the Preceptor of Killingworth in his feeling for beauty in nature and in poetry and

in song. "Miles Standish" is his most amiable picture of the Puritans. In the "New England Tragedies" Governor Endicott's death is a poetic retribution for his persecution of the Quakers, and Giles Corey's sacrifice to the witchcraft mania is a grim story of what the Puritans could do at their worst.

The later years of Longfellow—broadening and deepening of his work. From 1863 on, Longfellow continued in the various paths which he had already marked out, but his work in the main was in long narrative and in translation. His rendering of Dante is the preëminent piece of American translation, at once more poetic and more scholarly than Bryant's "Iliad" or Bayard Taylor's "Faust." It was a labor of love, extending over many years, the fruit of his teaching as well as of his study, and in its final form the product of nightly counsels with his learned neighbors Charles Eliot Norton and James Russell

Lowell. Age, fame, and the affectionate respect of the choicest friends saw him broaden and deepen in his philosophy of life. Little psalms and ballads no longer expressed him. Life had become a great outreaching drama, at which he hinted in his cycle "Christus: a Mystery." His last lyrics opened vistas of the future instead of explaining the present, and quite appropriately he left behind as an uncompleted fragment his dramatic poem on the greatest of dreamers and workers, Michael Angelo.

**His popularity.** There is no room for debate as to Longfellow's immense popularity. The number of editions in Eng-



HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

A later portrait

lish and in translation, the number of works in criticism, the number of titles in the British Museum catalogue, the number of poems included in scores of "Household" and "Fireside" collections, and the confidence with which booksellers stock up in anticipation of continued sales tell the story. But these facts in themselves do not establish Longfellow's claim to immortality, for there is no necessary connection between such popularity and greatness. There was little evidence in him of the genius which takes no thought for the things of the morrow. Until after the height of his career he never wrote in disregard of the public. "The fact is," he sent word to his father, when he was but seventeen, "I most eagerly aspire after future eminence in literature." And even earlier he had laid down his program when he wrote, "I am much better pleased with those pieces which touch the feelings and improve the heart, than with those which excite the imagination only." He had the good sense and the honesty not to pretend to inspiration. On the contrary, he was continually planning poems and series of poems and continually sitting down, not to write what he had thought but to think what he should write. He was an omnivorous but passive reader, and what his reading yielded him was literary stuff rather than vital ideas. He accepted and reflected the ways of his own time and did not modify them in any slightest degree. He was never revolutionary, rarely even fresh. He had something of Pope's gift for well-rounded utterances on life, something of Scott's ability to tell a good story well, and withal his own benevolent serenity.

**His limitations.** This was not a supreme endowment, but it was a very large one, and he developed it to a lofty degree. There will always be a case for Longfellow in the hands of those who value the inspirer of the many above the inspirer of the wise. There are ten who read Longfellow to every one who reads Whitman or Emerson. His wholesomeness, his clearness, his comfortable sanity, his very lack of intense emotion, endear him to those who wish to be entertained with a story or soothed.



POINTS OF LITERARY INTEREST IN NEW ENGLAND



and reassured by a gentle lyric. Edmund Clarence Stedman wrote finely of him:

His song was a household service, the ritual of our feastings and mournings; and often it rehearsed for us the tales of many lands, or, best of all, the legends of our own. I see him, a silver-haired minstrel, touching melodious keys, playing and singing in the twilight, within sound of the rotes of the sea. There he lingers late; the curfew bell has tolled and the darkness closes round, till at last that tender voice is silent, and he softly moves unto his rest.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What were the points in common in the Cambridge group and what were some of the points of difference?

2. What two authors should be thought of as belonging to the same decades as Longfellow? Which of these men used native backgrounds? Which used European backgrounds? Which used imaginary backgrounds?

3. Longfellow used a great variety of subject matter; he wrote poems based on classical themes, on stories of the Middle Ages, on more recent non-English literature, on the historic past of his own land, dividing his efforts between longer and shorter stories and other types of poems. Can you name one of each type?

4. Which one of Longfellow's works would you call an epic poem? What do you understand by epic? (See page 2, footnote.)

5. From what source did Longfellow draw his earlier ballads contained in "Ballads and Other Poems," and from what source the later ones included in the same volume? Why did he change his mind about naming the volume the "Skeleton in Armor"? What is a ballad?

6. Was Longfellow active in the antislavery cause? How many poems did he write about it? What are two or three general comparisons between Longfellow's war poems and Whittier's?

7. At what stage of Longfellow's career did he turn his attention to native themes? What five long poems were written on native themes? Was any of his work better than this part of it?

8. What two colleges was Longfellow professionally connected with, and for how long?

9. Apply the statement about the traits of popular poetry on page 259 to the "Village Blacksmith" and to "Excelsior."

10. How do you explain the popularity of "Evangeline"? Would these same qualities tend to make a poem popular today? a novel?

11. The same common folk characters mentioned on page 272 appear in Joel Chandler Harris's "Uncle Remus" stories. How many can you pick out?

12. What five characters in the story of Robin Hood correspond to the five chief characters in "Evangeline"?

13. In answering the following questions the Chronological Outlines, at the close of Chapters XX and XXV, and the Chart on page 451 will be of service.

*a.* What sixteen years were Longfellow's most fruitful period of authorship? What work was published in the first year of this period, and what in the last? What work in the middle of the period?

*b.* Name five titles of works on native themes published in these years.

*c.* How much later than Poe was Longfellow born? What was the difference in the ages of the two men at the time their respective important periods of authorship began?

*d.* Between the years 1845 and 1850 what do you observe about the amount of American fiction that was published? How much strikingly popular fiction is there? What was Longfellow's most important single work during these five years? Name two novels, with authors, published in England between 1845 and 1850.

*e.* Select five dates in connection with Longfellow which you think are the most important, and tell why.

## CHAPTER XIX

### JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL (1819-1891)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL. *Poems*: The Shepherd of King Admetus; The Present Crisis; She Came and Went; The Biglow Papers (first series)—"A Letter from Mr. Ezekiel Biglow" and "What Mr. Robinson Thinks"; The Vision of Sir Launfal, prelude to Part I; The First Snowfall; The Biglow Papers (second series)—"The Courtin'" and "Jonathan to John"; Harvard Commemoration Ode. *Prose*: Thoreau, Emerson the Lecturer, On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners (last five paragraphs).

Also passages as found in such collections as the following:

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 377-430. Ginn and Company.

BOYNTON, P. H. *American Poetry*, pp. 275-317. Charles Scribner's Sons.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings from American Literature*, pp. 366-435. Ginn and Company.

FOERSTER, NORMAN. *Chief American Prose Writers*, pp. 495-568. Houghton Mifflin Company.

PAGE, C. H. *Chief American Poets*, pp. 410-531. Houghton Mifflin Company.

STEDMAN, E. C. *An American Anthology*, pp. 202-218. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Which of the poems in the list above are poetry written to exert a moral influence and which are poetry written for its own sake? Can you say that one of these groups was addressed to the mind and one to the feelings? Which of the poems without a moral are personal and which are general?

What well-known and often-quoted lines do you find in them?

Should you say from the first Biglow Paper quoted that Lowell was a pacifist? What do you mean by the term? What does the Civil War series of Biglow Papers prove about Lowell in this respect?

Is Lowell's prose interesting? Is it easy to understand? Are you conscious of contrasts between Lowell's style and Emerson's? If so, what are they?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- The formative period in the life of Lowell
  - Boyhood and college years
  - Earliest poems and essays
  - "The Present Crisis"
- The arrival at maturity (1848)
  - "A Fable for Critics": the teacher
  - "The Biglow Papers" (first series): the reformer
- From 1850 to the Civil War
  - The *Atlantic Monthly*
- Later writings and public activities
- Lowell a poet in action
  - General characteristics
  - As a citizen, loyal but apologetic
    - For American culture
    - For American democracy
  - As an author
    - Spontaneous and effusive
    - A sincere idealist

**The formative period in the life of Lowell—boyhood and college years.** James Russell Lowell (1819–1891) was born in Cambridge, February 22, 1819, the youngest of six children. His father, the Reverend Charles Lowell, a Harvard graduate, was pastor of the West Church in Boston, three miles away. Elmwood,—Lowell's only permanent home throughout his life,—was an ample New England mansion surrounded by trees and flowering shrubs and with the literary atmosphere indoors that is produced by the presence of good books and good talk. The boy was one of a few day scholars at an excellent boarding-school in town, from which he entered college in the class of 1838. Like many another man of later distinction in letters, he was more industrious than regular as a student, really wasting little time, but often neglecting his assigned work and sometimes lapsing into mild disorder. Toward the end of senior year he was actually "rusticated" for a combination of petty offenses. Under this very sensible form of

punishment the boy, who was for a time suspended from residence in college, was assigned to a clergyman in some country town and required to keep up in his studies until he was allowed to return to the classroom. It happened that Lowell was sent to Concord, and that here (while in charge of a



ELMWOOD, LOWELL'S HOME IN CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

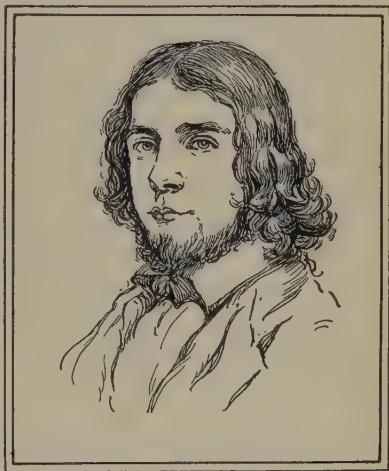
clergyman with the ominous name of Barzillai Frost) he was fretting over the class poem, in which he referred with youthful contempt to Carlyle, Emerson, the abolitionists, and the champions of prohibition and of woman's rights. It was an outburst on which he looked back with quiet amusement in later years, when he wrote,

Behold the baby arrows of that wit  
Wherewith I dared assail the woundless Truth!  
Love hath refilled the quiver, and with it  
The man shall win atonement for the youth.



And the proof that the boyish jibes were hardly more than a result of impatience at his imprisonment in Concord is contained in his record of his debt to Emerson the lecturer (see page 201) in these same student days.

**Earliest poems and essays.** In the first years out of college, from which he graduated in 1838, he was as undecided as many another boy about what he should do with the rest of his life. He rejected at once his father's profession of preaching, and abandoned thoughts of the law after he had earned his LL. B. degree in 1840. Soon, however, came his marriage to Maria White, which resulted in his becoming a soberer and a wiser man. She was already deeply interested in the social movements toward which his mind was turning. His devotion to her was expressed in his first volume of poems (1841), and her influence on him is



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An early portrait

shown in his zeal for the very reforms of which he had made fun in his class poem three years earlier. He founded a magazine, the *Pioneer*, which lived for three months in 1843; he contributed often to the monthlies; and, what was more important, he threw in his lot with the abolitionists by becoming a contributor to the *Pennsylvania Freeman*. In the meanwhile, also, in addition to his purely poetic work and to his efforts for reform, he took his first step in scholarly writing with his "Conversations on Some of the Old Poets," which appeared in a volume of 1844. From now to the end of his life Lowell divided his energies between poetry, civics, and scholarship.

**"The Present Crisis."** In 1845, 1846, and 1847 he wrote abundantly, contributing to more and more magazines, and apparently finding no trouble in selling his manuscripts. One piece of verse—"The Present Crisis"—is preëminent in this period. It was Lowell's way of protesting at the national policy in the war with Mexico, and, in its contrast with Thoreau's method (see page 213), throws light on his own later criticisms of Thoreau. It was repeated on every hand during the next twenty years and was given special emphasis through its frequent use by such orators as Wendell Phillips and Charles Sumner.

**The arrival at maturity (1848).** It was in 1848, however, that he came to the fullness of his powers, contributing some forty articles to four Boston periodicals and publishing four books "Poems" (second series), "A Fable for Critics," "The Biglow Papers" (first series), and "The Vision of Sir Launfal." He was only ten years out of college, and at that was only twenty-nine years old, but he showed fine taste, confident judgment, and a kind of mellow humor which belong to middle life.

**"A Fable for Critics": the teacher.** Just how wise "A Fable for Critics" was in its selections may be seen from a comparison of the writers criticized in it with those in Poe's "Literati" of two years earlier. Lowell's subjects omitted no man of lasting reputation and included almost no one who has been forgotten. Poe's selections, on the other hand, are unfamiliar to all but the student of literary history. In the "Fable" Lowell for the first time put to public use his ready command of impromptu verse. His pen was a little erratic, but when it would flow at all, it was likely to flow very readily. The jaunty treatment of his contemporaries was quite literally a series of running comments, trotting along in genial anapæst<sup>1</sup> gait, stum-

<sup>1</sup> The anapæst is made up of two short syllables and one long, as the four in the following line:

Not a word      not a wail      from a lip      was let fall.

The dactyl is the reverse of the anapæst, one long and two short, as the first five in the following line:

Angel of    God was there    none to a-    waken the    slumbering    maiden.

bling sometimes on a pun, scampering with light foot across extended metaphors, and taking the barriers of double and triple rime without a sign of exertion. "The Fable" was exactly deserving of Holmes's friendly comment, "I think it is capital—crammed full and rammed down hard—powder (lots of it)—shot—slugs—very little wadding, and that is guncotton—all crowded into a rusty-looking sort of a blunderbuss barrel, as it were—capped with a percussion preface—and cocked with a title-page as apropos as a wink to a joke." Different as it is from "The Literati" in scale, tone, and subjects, the two deserve mention together as curatives both for too great regard for English models and for wholesale praise of everything American.

**"The Biglow Papers" (first series): the reformer.** With "The Biglow Papers" Lowell returned to the attack which he had begun in the "Present Crisis." He wrote in 1860:

I believed our war with Mexico (though we had as just ground for it as a strong nation ever has against a weak one) to be essentially a war of false pretences, and that it would result in widening the boundaries and so prolonging the life of slavery. . . . Against these and many other things I thought all honest men should protest. I was born and bred in the country, and the dialect was homely to me. I tried my first "Biglow Paper" and found that it had a great run. So I wrote the others from time to time in the year which followed, always very rapidly, and sometimes (as with "What Mr. Robinson Thinks") at one sitting.

He wrote the nine numbers of the series not only in the dialect of the countryside but from the viewpoint of a forthright, hard-headed, Puritan-tinged Yankee; and he put them out as the compositions of Hosea Biglow under the encouragement of Parson Wilbur, without the use of his own name. He was surprised at the reception of the volume, fifteen hundred copies of which were sold in the first week. If he had put on the cap and bells to play fool to the public, he said, it was less to make the people laugh than to win a hearing for certain serious things which he had deeply at heart. "The Biglow Papers" were

undoubtedly Lowell's great popular success. They carried the fight into the enemies' camp in the abolition struggle, they were taken up with new success at the outbreak of the Civil War, and they widened the reading public for his more sober political prose and for his more elevated verse.

**From 1850 to the Civil War.** However, Lowell was not satisfied to give all his energy to fighting. In a letter of 1850 he wrote to a friend, "I begin to feel that I must enter on a new year of my apprenticeship. . . . I find that reform can not take up the whole of me, and I am quite sure that eyes were given us to look about us with sometimes, and not to be always looking forward." He spent the next fifteen months in Europe with his wife and children. When he came back to America, he started eagerly to writing but was soon checked by the death of his wife. By good fortune, just at this time he was invited to deliver a very important series of lectures on English poetry in Boston; and before the series was completed Longfellow had resigned from his professorship at Harvard (see pages 266 and 267) and Lowell had been made his successor. He spent another year abroad preparing for this new work, and in 1856 entered on duties which he performed at Harvard till 1877.

**The *Atlantic Monthly*.** But scholarship could not take up the whole of Lowell any more than reform could. For several years the question of establishing a new Boston magazine had been in the air. When it was made certain, Lowell was secured as the first editor, carrying it through from 1857 to 1861. These years led him, in spite of himself, back to serious problems of national life, and during them he began writing a series, which finally amounted to sixteen, of vigorous political articles bearing on the issues of the Civil War.

Now as the war went on he began a second series of "Biglow Papers" which were longer and more popular than the first. A striking fact about the second series is that during the World War so many of these were quoted as good war literature again. The reason, of course, was that while Lowell was writ-

ing about particular events of his own day, he was also discussing principles which are always true in war time. Thus in the best of them, for example, "Mason and Slidell: a Yankee Idyll," he said most of the important things that can be said about military preparedness, international jealousies, the changes made necessary in international law by the progress of invention, the appeals to national hatred and to a tribal or national God, the dangers of an indecisive peace, and the essential values of democracy.

**Later writings and public activities.** When the war was over Lowell, like most of the other writers of his day, went back to happier themes. He wrote three prose volumes of literary essays and several long poems—such as the Harvard "Commemoration Ode," "The Concord Centennial Ode," and "Three Memorial Poems"—on the past and the promise of American life. During the years from 1870 to 1877 friends were continually trying to press Lowell into public life, and finally in the latter year he entered as foreign minister on eight years of the highest service to his country, the first two and a half at the Court of Spain and the remainder at the Court of England. There were few men in the United States as well qualified as he for the Spanish ministry. He had taught the language and the literature and there was much in him which responded to the Spanish character. He wrote to one friend, "I like the Spaniards very well as far as



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I know them, and have an instinctive sympathy with their want of aptitude for business"; and to another, "There is something oriental in my own nature which sympathizes with this 'let her slide' temper of the hidalgos." Both of which statements should be taken partly as true to the letter and partly as an indication of the adjustability which distinguishes the American from the Englishman.

The most compact tribute to his five and a half years at the Court of St. James was the remark of a Londoner that he found all the Britons strangers and left them all cousins. Lowell was one of the two extreme types of American whom Victorian England chose to like and admire. One, of the Mark Twain and Joaquin Miller sort, was free and easy, smacking of the Wild West, completely in contrast with the English gentleman; the other, in the persons of men like Lowell and Longfellow, was the nearest American approach to cultivated John Bull. In diplomatic circles Lowell's tact always tempered his firmness, even leading some of his countrymen to complain because he never defied other governments nor blustered at them. And in his immensely important appearances as the representative of the United States at all manner of social occasions he charmed his hosts by the humor, grace, and pointedness of his public speeches.

In the years remaining to him he literally uttered much of the best that he wrote. He was no longer an eager producer, but he could be tempted to speak by special invitations. So he delivered addresses out of the fullness of his experience at Birmingham University, at Westminster Abbey, and, after his return, at the celebration of Forefathers' Day in Plymouth, at the 250th anniversary of the founding of Harvard, before the reform leagues of Boston and New York, and at a convention of the Modern Language Association of America. These, with his last volume of verse, "Heartsease and Rue" (1888), became his farewell words. He died in 1891.

**Lowell a poet in action.** The most notable feature of Lowell's career is that he was a poet in action. His first and last

volumes were short personal poems. In the forty-seven years between he was always an artist, always interested in expressing himself well, and always delighting in good literature. At the same time he enjoyed being among men. He talked as well as he wrote, whether in conversation or in public addresses. He was clever and charming, and he enjoyed giving pleasure by sharing his own pleasantries. His quips are like the gifts and favors of old-time children's parties—hidden all over the house and just as likely to defy search as to turn up under a napkin or in the umbrella of a departing guest. And behind all, Lowell was pre-vaillingly American, with the combined trust in democracy and the fear for it that belonged to his group in his generation.

**General characteristics**—as a citizen, loyal but apologetic for American culture. From 1820 on, Irving, Cooper, Bryant, and

their followers had protested more and more frequently (see pages 99–102) at the certain condescension in foreigners on which Lowell wrote at length in his essay of 1865. Yet all these men, and most highly educated Americans, encouraged this condescension by evidently expecting it. Lowell, though loyal, was always apologetic, always trying to gain confidence in his countrymen but always embarrassed by conspicuously home-bred Americans. When Mark Twain visited William Dean Howells in Cambridge in 1871 they were both young sojourners from what was to Cambridge a vaguely vast West. Young Mr. Clemens



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A later portrait

did not care at all, and young Mr. Howells did not care as far as he was concerned, though he cared a great deal in behalf of his friend, who was so incurably Western. And in recording his uneasiness he recorded a striking fact of that generation: that American culture was afraid even of the rough-and-ready Americans whom Europe was applauding. "I did not care," said Mr. Howells of Mr. Clements, "to expose him to the critical edge of that Cambridge acquaintance which might not have appreciated him at, say, his transatlantic value. In America his popularity was as instant as it was vast. But it must be acknowledged that for a much longer time here than in England polite learning hesitated his praise. . . . I went with him to see Longfellow, but I do not think Longfellow made much of him, and Lowell made less."

**Apologetic for American democracy.** In habits of intellectual fineness, in manners, and in choice of personal friends Lowell was an aristocrat; yet in spite of these tendencies he was in principle a stanch democrat; and when put to the test that sort of democrat is the most reliable. The conflict is clear throughout his writings. The address of 1888 on "Democracy" need not be gravely mentioned as proof of Lowell's belief in government by the people; it is only the final statement of what he had all his life been saying. Yet he approached his subject with the smile of half apology which had become a habit to him: "I shall address myself to a single point only in the long list of offences of which we are more or less gravely accused, because that really includes all the rest." It crops out in the Thoreau essay, apropos of Emerson: "If it was ever questionable whether democracy could develop a gentleman, the problem has been affirmatively solved at last"; and in the Lincoln essay: "Mr. Lincoln has also been reproached with Americanism by some not unfriendly British critics; but, with all deference, we cannot say that we like him any the worse for it." In the ode on Agassiz he heaved a sigh of relief that the great naturalist was willing to put up with New England conditions; and even in the Harvard "Commemoration Ode" he broke out suddenly with

Who now shall sneer?  
Who dare again to say we trace  
Our lines to a plebeian race?

The point is not in the least that Lowell did not believe in democracy; every remark of this sort led up to fresh defense of it. The point is that, as with a quarrel, it takes two to make a condescension and that Lowell did his part. It is difficult to imagine the young foreigner of "German-silver aristocracy," whom he describes at length in his famous essay, condescending, with success, to Lincoln or Emerson or to Mark Twain or Whitman.

**As an author—spontaneous and effusive.** The frequent expression of this self-defensive mood is an illustration of another leading trait in Lowell—his spontaneity. Since he felt as he did there would have been no virtue in concealing the fact, and Lowell seldom concealed anything. He wrote readily and fully, often beyond the verge of wordiness. He gave his ideas free rein as they filed or crowded or raced into his mind, not only welcoming those that came but often seeming to invite those that were approaching afar off. Only in a few of his lyrics did he write compactly. Most of the introductions to essays and longer poems proceed in the manner of the "mus-ing organist" of the first stanza in "Sir Launfal," "beginning doubtfully and far away," and what follows is in most cases as slow to get to the point as the talk of a village gossip. The consequences are not altogether fortunate. Much of his writing could have been more quickly started and more compactly stated, and practically all of it could have been more firmly constructed. Emerson's essays lack firm structure because they were not written to a program but were collections of paragraphs already set down in his journals. Lowell's essays, although deliberately composed, are equally without design. His method was to fill himself with his subject of the moment and then to write eagerly and rapidly, letting "his fingers wander as they list." His productions were consequently poured out rather than built up. They have the char-

acter of most excellent conversation which circles about a single theme, allows frequent digression, admits occasional brilliant sallies, includes various "good things," and finally stops without any definite conclusion. In this respect, while Lowell was by no means artless in the sense of being inexperienced, he was also by no means artful in the sense of planning his approach to the general reader. The only readers of whom he seems to have been distinctly conscious were the bookish circle of his own associates. He would fling out learned allusions as though in challenge, and he wrote in a flowing, many-syllabled diction which was nicely exact but which rarely would concede the simpler word.

This same surging spontaneity was both the strength and weakness of his poetry. He inclined too much to fall back on the theory of inspiration. "'Tis only while we are forming our opinions," he once wrote, "that we are very anxious to propagate them"; and as he composed most of his poems while he was in this state of anxiety they became effusions rather than compositions. His first drafts, in fact, were fulfillments of Bryant's injunction in "The Poet":

While the warm current tingles through thy veins  
Set forth the burning words in fluent strains.

But in his revisions he was unable to follow the instructions to the end:

Then summon back the original glow, and mend  
The strain with rapture that with fire was penned.

As a consequence his poems when published were as loose-jointed as when he first wrote them, and many of the revisions in detail were shifted back to their original form.

**A sincere idealist.** On the other hand, his easy command of versification, his gift of phrasing, and his rich poetic imagination resulted in very many passages of beauty and feeling, particularly in the later odes like the Commemoration and Agassiz poems, into which he poured the fine fervor of his



patriotism. In these his sincerity, his idealism, and his nature-feeling combined with "the incontrollable poetic impulse which is the authentic mark of a new poem" and which Emerson ascribed to him in a journal entry of 1868.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Read the concluding stanzas of the "Present Crisis" and note how they apply to the attempt of the Puritans to arrive at fixed truth. (See page 10.)

2. Read and compare what Poe, Longfellow, and Lowell had to say of overstressing the American quality of American literature as noted on pages 167, 268, 289.

3. What is noteworthy about Lowell's thoughts and utterances on the Mexican War as quoted in his recollections of 1860? (See page 285.)

4. What was the important difference in Lowell's attitude toward the two wars discussed in the two series of "Biglow Papers"?

5. Note in Chronological Chart No. III, on page 449, the well-known periodicals which were in existence when the *Atlantic Monthly* was established. Which of these were known to you? With how many of them can you connect authors whom we have already studied?

6. What was the difference between Lowell's use of common dialect and the use protested against by Stedman (mentioned on page 371)? Is there any difference in the United States between literary, or written, English, and English spoken by literary people?

7. Read "Mason and Slidell: a Yankee Idyll," "Biglow Papers" (second series) as a commentary on the World War.

8. Lowell was an independent, but seldom an original, thinker. What is the distinction?

9. Read the opening pages of any one of Lowell's prose essays and decide whether they might profitably have been condensed.

10. Read a page selected at random from Lowell's prose and note the number and kind of allusions to unfamiliar literature and history and the proportion of long and unusual words.

11. What do you understand by democracy? What are the two meanings in the United States of the word "democrat"? Was Lowell a democrat in the nonpolitical sense?

12. Profitable use can be made of the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters XX and XXV in answering the following questions:

*a.* In what year did Lowell come to the fullness of his powers, and what was the output of that year? Do you find any other titles of importance in this year? Is there any historical event by which you can remember this year? (See Chronological Chart No. II, p. 381.)

*b.* With what year did Lowell's richest period of authorship end? Are there any titles of importance in this year? Is there any historical event by which you can remember the date of it?

*c.* In point of time how does Lowell's most fruitful period compare with Longfellow's? (See Chronological Chart No. II, p. 381.) How does it compare with Whittier's? with Hawthorne's? with Thoreau's?

*d.* From a study of the Outlines, name all the occupations you can discover that Lowell engaged in and the positions that he held.

*e.* During what years was Lowell abroad in diplomatic service? What other American writers already discussed went over in similar service?

*f.* What was the date of the Mexican War, on which Emerson, Thoreau, and Lowell expressed decided opinions, and what was the cause of it?

*g.* What titles of Lowell's indicate a bearing on the events of 1861-1865?

## CHAPTER XX

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**HARRIET BEECHER STOWE (1811-1896)**

### SUGGESTED READINGS

**HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.** Uncle Tom's Cabin. (May be obtained in Everyman's Library edition, E. P. Dutton & Company.)

See comment on reading novels on page 125 or page 226.

What is the plot in briefest terms?

Who are the leading four or five characters? In point of goodness or badness are they average or extreme types of people?

What sorts of backgrounds did Mrs. Stowe use? Did she invent these or copy from originals? How do we know?

Whom does Mrs. Stowe resemble more, Cooper or Hawthorne?

Was the story addressed to all Americans or to a definite fraction? Was it written to change opinions, to strengthen them, or both?

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

Mrs. Stowe's chief title to fame

The early life of Mrs. Stowe

Girlhood

Cincinnati a New England outpost

Early authorship

The backgrounds for "Uncle Tom"

"Uncle Tom's Cabin"

Circumstances of publication

Mrs. Stowe's fame and influence

A piece of propagandist literature

Chief later novels

"The Minister's Wooing"

The religious theme

The historical background

"Oldtown Folks"

Interpretation of New England

Picture of a bygone period

Last years of Mrs. Stowe

**Mrs. Stowe's chief title to fame.** The name of Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) is in all likelihood not so well known as the name of her most famous work, "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Millions upon millions have read her story, both for its interest and because of its place in American history. Yet relatively few have read her other novels, and today those who turn to them do so not so much for their own sakes as because



A VIEW OF THE OHIO RIVER FROM CINCINNATI, 1853

they contribute a minor chapter in the history of the American novel. She entered literature by the pathway of reform. "The heroic element was strong in me, having come down by ordinary generation from a long line of Puritan ancestry, and . . . it made me long to do something, I knew not what: to fight for my country, or to make some declaration on my own account." Then, when the story-telling gift was developed and the reform was accomplished, she continued as a novelist, and a distinctly popular one in her own day.

**The early life of Mrs. Stowe—girlhood.** She was born in 1811 at Litchfield, Connecticut. Her famous brother, Henry Ward Beecher, was two years younger. After the death of her mother, when she was but four years old, she had a suc-

cession of homes during girlhood: first with an aunt, then for some years under her father's roof after his remarriage, and next from 1824 to 1832 with her older sister, Catherine, who had established a school in Hartford. In all these experiences she lived under kindly protection and in somewhat literary surroundings, and in all of them she breathed an atmosphere which was heavy with the old-school Puritan theology. In 1832, when Harriet was twenty-one years old, her father, after a six-year pastorate of a Boston church, went to Cincinnati as president of a theological seminary, and the two sisters joined him there.

**Cincinnati a New England outpost.** This move into what was then the Far West was not, however, a banishment into the wilds, for Cincinnati was in those days a sort of outpost of Eastern culture. Harriet's father, Lyman Beecher, was one of many liberal Bostonians who lived there for a while. The Ohio River, which flowed by its doors, served as the great highway from the East to the Mississippi Valley. There were literary clubs in the town, good and prolific publishing houses, and, in the *Western Monthly*, the beginning of a succession of magazines. Catherine wrote back from an advance trip of inspection:

I have become somewhat acquainted with those ladies we shall have most to do with, and find them intelligent, New England sort of folks. Indeed, this is a New England city in all its habits, and its inhabitants are more than half from New England. . . . I know of no place in the world where there is so fair a prospect of finding everything that makes social and domestic life pleasant.

**Early authorship.** While the father was occupied in his work the two daughters started a school for girls, with the double promise of Catherine's Hartford experience and the type of people among whom they were settling. But Harriet was not to be a schoolmistress for long. In 1833 she was the winner of a fifty-dollar prize in a short-story competition conducted by the *Western Monthly*, and in 1836 she married the



Reverend Calvin E. Stowe, her father's colleague in Lane Seminary. How she persisted to combine authorship and motherhood in the next sixteen years is a marvel; none the less so because since the days of Anne Bradstreet (see page 27) an occasional woman has succeeded. In 1842 her husband wrote to her: "My dear, you must be a literary woman. It is so written in the book of fate. Get a good stock of health and brush up your mind." In the next year her first volume, a book of selected stories, was published by *Harper's*; but by 1848 she had become the mother of six children, the oldest only eleven, and no more books had appeared.

**The backgrounds for "Uncle Tom."** Nevertheless, she was not to sink under the tide of home duties. She had visited in the South, witnessing the more kindly aspects of slavery, and in her own town she had seen the pursuit of fleeing slaves, the conscientious defiance of law by abolitionists, the violence of proslavery mobs, and had feared for the life of her brother, who was reported to have suffered death with his friend Lovejoy when the latter was shot in Alton. In these exciting times she came to feel more and more that her writing must be turned to good account. Toward the end of 1850 Mrs. Stowe came to her great resolve to write something that would arouse the whole nation; and at a communion service in February of 1851 there appeared to her, as in a vision, the scene of the death of Uncle Tom.

**"Uncle Tom's Cabin"—circumstances of publication.** The story began its appearance in the *National Era*, an antislavery magazine, June 5, 1851, and was announced to run for three months; but as it was allowed to take its own course it was not actually concluded until April of the next year. Although it had already attracted the widest attention, the question of publication in book form was in some doubt until it was undertaken by an obscure Boston firm (for the Stowes had moved back to New England); and the outcome was so uncertain that the Stowes did not dare to risk half the cost of publication for a prospect of half the proceeds. Yet three thousand copies

were sold on the day of issue, and three hundred thousand in America within the first year. In England, also after a little hesitation, reprinting was soon started, and by the close of the year eighteen different houses had put out forty editions, and in the end a million and a half copies were circulated in Great Britain and the colonies. Various translations soon followed.

**Mrs. Stowe's fame and influence.** Mrs. Stowe's "fortune was made" of course; but of quite as much moment to her was the fact that her influence was made in the great fight in which she was enlisted. In 1853 she sailed for what turned out to be a sort of triumphal tour in Great Britain, in the course of which large sums of money were given her for use in fighting slavery. Moreover, there was value even in the opposition she had aroused. Whittier wrote to Garrison:

"What a glorious work Harriet Beecher Stowe has wrought. Thanks for the Fugitive Slave Law! Better would it be for slavery if that law had never been enacted; for it gave occasion for 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'" And Garrison wrote in turn to Mrs. Stowe: "I estimate the value of anti-slavery writing by the abuse it brings. Now all the defenders of slavery have let me alone and are abusing you." So much objection was directed at the honesty of the work that the author compiled a "Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin," in which she presented documentary evidence for every kind of fact used in the story; and of this she was able to write: "Not one fact or statement in it has been disproved as yet. I have yet to learn of even an *attempt* to disprove."



HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

A piece of propagandist<sup>1</sup> literature. The only fair basis for criticizing "Uncle Tom" is as a piece of propagandist literature. It was a story with an avowed purpose: "to awaken sympathy and feeling for the African race, as they exist among us; to show their wrongs and sorrows, under a system so necessarily cruel and unjust as to defeat and do away the good effects of all that can be attempted for them, by their best friends, under it." Mrs. Stowe felt no pride in it as a story, referring with perfect serenity to the criticisms on its artistry. But as a popular document she composed it with the greatest of art. It was based on a deep conviction and on solid facts. It was a passionate assault on slavery, but it was honest in its acknowledgments that many a slaveholder was doing his best to overcome its evils. Far more than half the book is devoted to kindly masters and well-treated bondsmen; the tragedy of Uncle Tom is emphasized by the defeated or careless good intentions of the Shelbys and St. Clare. The appeals to anti-slavery prejudice, moreover, could not have been more effective. (1) The democratic movement which had swept Europe in 1848 was fresh in the minds of all thinking people. (2) The challenge to Christian principle was made in a day when the mention of Bible authority was almost universally effective. (3) The natural resentment at seeing good thwarted by evil was roused at every turn in the story. (4) And the frank connection of beauty of character with beauty of form served its purpose. "Let it be considered, for instance," wrote Ruskin in "Modern Painters," "exactly how far in the commonest lithograph of some utterly popular subject—for instance, the teaching of Uncle Tom by Eva—the sentiment which is supposed to be excited by the exhibition of Christianity in youth, is complicated by Eva's having a dainty foot and a well-made slipper." This was a chance illustration for Ruskin, who was

<sup>1</sup>"Propagandist" and "propaganda" have an offensive sound to many now on account of the memories of the World War. Propaganda simply means, however, an organized plan for spreading information and affecting public opinion, and it may be quite open and innocent.

writing about pictorial art, but the point of it is fully illustrated by the visible charms of Eliza, Eva, Emmeline, and Cassie, as well as of George Harris, George Shelby, and St. Clare. Uncle Tom was almost the only good character who needed the defense of "Handsome is that handsome does."

It is not at all likely that Mrs. Stowe calculated on these various appeals—social, religious, sentimental. In fact, we have her word for it that the book "wrote itself." With a moderately developed talent for story-writing she happened to have just the tone of mind and the level of culture which were fitted for a popular appeal, and she employed them to the utmost effect. Moreover, she used them just as Whittier used his powers in some of his moralistic poetry, not relying on her narrative to carry its own burdens, but expounding it as she went along and appending a chapter of "Concluding Remarks" with various odds and ends of afterthought—matters which do not belong in a novel and which do not even belong together in any well-organized chapter, but matters which in a persuasive document doubtless were of great value.

"Uncle Tom" was a success which, of course, could not be repeated. The second antislavery novel, "Dred, a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp," sold enormously on the strength of its predecessor and on its own merits, but it could only fan the embers which had previously been ablaze. The task had been done; and though it was well repeated, and though the application pointed this time to the degrading effects of slavery on the master class, "Dred" could never be anything but an aftermath to "Uncle Tom."

**Chief later novels.** With a removal to Andover, Massachusetts, in 1852, Mrs. Stowe accompanied her husband to his last post in another theological school, settling into a congenial New England village in comfort and among cultured and orthodox neighbors. And here she continued to write until her final move to Hartford, doing her best work in the field of provincial stories of New England life and character, drawing on a kind of material which had been quite neglected up to her time.

"The Minister's Wooing"—the religious theme. The first of these, "The Minister's Wooing," was her contribution to the newly established *Atlantic Monthly*. With her recent successes fresh in the public mind, she was a strong "selling feature" for the ambitious magazine. Through this novel she made her first attempt, since the forgotten "Mayflower" volume, to write a story in which the moral should take care of itself. There was a moral, to be sure, and a striking one, for it pointed to a distrust of the older New England Calvinism and made clear the distinction between an uplifting religion and a depressing theology (see footnote, page 38). In Simeon Brown she developed the obnoxious professor of the declining faith.

He was one of that class of people who, of a freezing day, will plant themselves directly between you and the fire, and there stand and argue to prove that selfishness is the root of all moral evil. . . . He was one of those men who suppose themselves submissive to the divine will, to the uttermost extent demanded by the extreme theology of that day, simply because they have no nerves to feel, no imagination to conceive what endless happiness or suffering is, and who deal therefore with the great problem of the salvation or damnation of myriads as a problem of theological algebra, to be worked out by their inevitable  $x y z$ .

The book emphasizes the refrain of "The Deacon's Masterpiece," which appeared while she was writing "The Minister's Wooing," "Logic is logic. That's all I say."

It is no accident, therefore, that she represents Simeon, this piece of complacent selfishness, as equally far from Dr. Hopkins, the large-hearted Puritan clergyman who was bigger than his creed, and from young James Marvin, who wanted to be better than he was but had no creed at all. In the chapter "Which Treats of Romance" Mrs. Stowe perhaps did not let the moral wholly take care of itself, since she came into court as a special pleader for beauty as an ally of religion and brought a charge against the niggardliness of a life founded on a dread of the day of doom (see page 24). The moral of the



book, if one must be given in a sentence, is that love realized is even finer than love renounced.

**The historical background.** Like "Uncle Tom" and "Dred," the "Minister's Wooing" has its element of instruction, for it is a studied and faithful picture of Rhode Island life just after the Revolution—a period about as remote from Mrs. Stowe as the slave-story epoch is from the modern reader. And because it is less of an allegory, the characters are more lifelike, not having to carry each his Christian's pack of argument on his shoulders. As Lowell stated, they were set in contrast not by the simple and obvious method in earlier fiction of putting them in different social ranks—aristocrat and commoner, master and man, Roundhead and Cavalier, pioneer, Indian, and townsman. Between Mrs. Stowe's village folk such distinctions were of little account; instead she succeeded in showing the vital and homely differences between one individual and another without regard to social classes.

**"Oldtown Folks"**—interpretation of New England. Mrs. Stowe's best-written novel is "Oldtown Folks" (1869). The people of the story are many and varied, ranging from Sam Lawson, the village Rip Van Winkle, to the choicest of old Boston adornments of society. While the book had no social purpose, it had the avowed narrative "object . . . to interpret to the world the New England life and character in that particular time in its history which may be called the seminal period"—a statement followed by the thoroughly provincial assertion that "New England was the seed-bed of this great American Republic, and of *all* that is likely to come of it." It should be remembered in Mrs. Stowe's defense that when she wrote these words the cleavage between North and South could account for many sharp words from both sides and that to most Easterners the district beyond the Mississippi was vaguely unknown.

**Picture of a bygone period.** In "breadth of canvas," to resort to the slang of criticism, "Oldtown Folks" is in Mrs. Stowe's whole output what "Middlemarch" is in George Eliot's. It is

filled with popular tableaux—in the old meeting-house, in the grandmother's kitchen, at the manor house, in the coach on its grave progress to Boston, in the school and its surroundings; and it is red-lettered with festivals in which the richest flavor of social life in the early nineteenth century is developed. As a life-story of the four youthful characters it does not linger vividly in mind. One does not recall them and their inner experiences half so clearly as one does their intellectual and social and material surroundings. Yet the shape of their life experience was determined by just these external influences; and how clearly they belonged to a bygone period appears at a glance of comparison with any similar twentieth-century story. Margaret Deland's "The Iron Woman," for example, is a companion picture of four young people, but with how great a difference. The new industrialism, the decline of a theology which is only a relic in the "iron woman," Mrs. Maitland, the modernized respect for woman, suggest the vast change in the fashions of human thought in a half century; and this is no less convincing because the conclusions of Mrs. Deland's characters are practically the same as those of Mrs. Stowe's.

**Last years of Mrs. Stowe.** In the quarter century remaining to her after the writing of "Oldtown Folks" Mrs. Stowe's life was a quiet fulfillment of her earlier career. From a Florida plantation on which she spent her winters she worked for the welfare of the negro and the upbuilding of the South. She worked as before in coöperation with the Church, but her dislike for the grimness of Calvinism had led her to become an Episcopalian. As a novelist she kept on presenting New England and Northern life to the reading public which she had already won—a reading public who enjoyed what Lowell almost too cleverly called "water gruel of fiction, thinned with sentiment and thickened with morality." Her lasting fame will doubtless rest on the fact that she was a story-writer of moderate talent who in one memorable instance devoted her gift to the making of American history.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In her interest in reform was Mrs. Stowe more like the Concord or the Cambridge writers?

2. In what respects was her development as a writer comparable to that of a well-known Puritan poetess?

3. What antislavery magazine other than the *National Era* was mentioned in the chapter on Whittier? Do you know which was the more famous?

4. What were the successive steps in the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" up to the time of its greatest popularity?

5. What is meant by "propaganda"? What effective use of propaganda between 1910 and 1920 gave the word an unpleasant sense in the United States?

6. What four features in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" helped to give it a widely popular appeal?

7. What connection did Mrs. Stowe have with the early successes of the *Atlantic Monthly*? In connection with whom has this magazine already been mentioned?

8. What definite purpose did she have in the writing of the "Minister's Wooing"? in writing "Oldtown Folks"?

9. Does a clear purpose in a novel, other than that of telling a good story well, ever aid to make it popular? Is an avowed purpose likely to make a novel more, or less, of a work of art?

10. In answering the following questions the Chronological Outlines at the close of this chapter and of Chapter XXV will be found helpful:

a. What five authors were in their most fruitful periods of authorship about the same years as Mrs. Stowe's? (See Chronological Chart No. II, p. 381.)

b. What was the most important American book two years before the publishing of "Uncle Tom's Cabin"? three years after?

c. How many years later was the "Minister's Wooing" written? What well-known English novel was published the same year? What important scientific work?

d. How long after the *Atlantic Monthly* was established was the "Minister's Wooing" published? Why is this question asked?

# SECTION IV

DATES	AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS	AMERICAN LITERARY HISTORY
1840-1850	<p>POE: Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, 1840            COOPER: The Pathfinder, 1840; The Deerslayer, 1841            EMERSON: Essays, 1841            LONGFELLOW: Ballads and Other Poems; Poems on Slavery, 1842            EMERSON: Essays, Second Series, 1844            JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL: Poems, 1844            POE: The Raven and Other Poems, 1845            HAWTHORNE: Mosses from an Old Manse, 1846            BRYANT: Poems, 1847            EMERSON: Poems, 1847            LONGFELLOW: Evangeline, 1847            LOWELL: The Biglow Papers, First Series; A Fable for Critics; The Vision of Sir Launfal; Poems, Second Series, 1848            HENRY DAVID THOREAU: A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers, 1849            WHITTIER: The Voices of Freedom, 1849</p>	<p>The Dial, 1840-1844            Brook Farm Community, 1841-1847            Cincinnatus Hiner (Joaquin) Miller born, 1841            Sidney Lanier born, 1842            Irving, minister to Spain, 1842-1846            George W. Cable born, 1844            Lowell: editor (with Robert Carter) of the Pioneer, 1843 (three months)            Thoreau at Walden, 1845-1847            Poe, editor of the Broadway Journal, 1845            Holmes on the medical faculty at Harvard, 1847-1882            Joel Chandler Harris born, 1848            Poe died, 1849</p>
1850-1860	<p>POE: The Literati (1846), 1850            EMERSON: Representative Men, 1850            HAWTHORNE: The Scarlet Letter, 1850            LONGFELLOW: The Seaside and the Fireside, 1850            HAWTHORNE: The House of Seven Gables; A Wonder Book for Boys and Girls; The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales, 1851            LONGFELLOW: The Golden Legend, 1851            HAWTHORNE: The Blithedale Romance, 1852            HARRIET BEECHER STOWE: Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1852            THOREAU: Walden, 1854            LONGFELLOW: Hiawatha, 1855            WALT WHITMAN: Leaves of Grass, 1855, 1856, 1860            STOWE: Dred, 1856            OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES: The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, 1858            LONGFELLOW: The Courtship of Miles Standish, 1858            STOWE: The Minister's Wooing, 1859            IRVING: The Life of Washington, 1855-1859</p>	<p>Margaret Fuller Ossoli died, 1850            Harper's New Monthly Magazine established, 1850            Cooper died, 1851            Lowell went to Europe for fifteen months, 1851            Mrs. Stowe went to Europe in the interest of abolition cause, 1853            Hawthorne in the consular service at Liverpool, then at Rome, 1853-1860            Thomas Nelson Page born, 1853            Harper's Weekly established, 1856            Lowell succeeded Longfellow at Harvard, 1856            The Atlantic Monthly established, 1857            Lowell editor of Atlantic Monthly, 1857-1861            Russell's Magazine (Charleston, S. C.), 1857-1860            Margaret Wade (Deland) born, 1857            Irving died, 1859</p>

## SECTION IV

### ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LITERATURE

Thomas Hardy born, 1840  
 Browning: Pippa Passes, 1841  
 Carlyle: Heroes and Hero Worship, 1841  
*Punch* established, 1841  
 Tennyson: Poems, 1842  
 Browning: A Blot in the 'Scutch-eon, 1843  
 Carlyle: Past and Present, 1843  
 Dickens: Christmas Carol, 1843  
 Wordsworth: poet laureate, 1843-1850  
 Dickens: Dombey and Son, 1846-1848  
 Tennyson: The Princess, 1847  
 Thackeray: Vanity Fair, 1847-1848  
 Macaulay: History of England, 1848-1860  
 Dickens: David Copperfield, 1849-1850  
 Ruskin: Seven Lamps of Architecture, 1849  
 Thackeray: Pendennis, 1849-1850

Wordsworth died, 1850  
 Mrs. Browning: Sonnets from the Portuguese, 1850  
 Meredith: Poems, 1850  
 Tennyson: In Memoriam, 1850  
 Tennyson, poet laureate, 1850-1892  
 Thackeray: Henry Esmond, 1852  
 Tolstoi: Youth, 1852  
 Charles Kingsley: Hypatia, 1853  
 Matthew Arnold: Poems, 1855  
 Browning: Men and Women, 1855  
 Tennyson: Maud, 1855  
 Joseph Conrad born, 1857  
 Thackeray: The Virginians, 1857-1859  
 Tennyson: Idylls of the King, 1858-1886  
 De Quincey and Macaulay died, 1859  
 Darwin: Origin of Species, 1859  
 Dickens: Tale of Two Cities, 1859

### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Population of free states 2,400,000 above that of slave states (total for North and South, 17,000,000), 1840  
 System of national nominating conventions fully established, 1840  
 William Henry Harrison made president in March; died a month later, 1841  
 John Tyler, president, April, 1841-1845  
 Morse telegraph in the United States, 1844  
 James K. Polk, president, 1845-1849  
 War with Mexico over Texan annexation, 1845  
 Mormons moved out of Illinois to Utah, 1846  
 Repeal of Corn Laws in England, 1846  
 Anæsthetics first used in surgery, 1846  
 Peace with Mexico, whereby New Mexico and California were ceded to the United States for a large money payment, 1848  
 Revolution in France: the Second Republic, Louis Napoleon president, 1848  
 Insurrection in Austria (fall of Metternich), in Hungary, Poland, Russia, Spain, Germany, with little success, 1848  
 California gold rush of 1849  
 Zachary Taylor, president, 1849; died, July, 1850

Population of free states 4,000,000 above that of slave states (total for North and South, 23,263,485), 1850  
 Millard Fillmore, president, 1850-1853  
 Napoleon III proclaimed himself "Emperor of the French," 1852  
 Franklin Pierce, president, 1853-1857  
 Survey made for railroad from Chicago to the Pacific coast, 1853  
 The Republican party formed, of Whigs, Free-Soilers, etc., 1854  
 Immigration to the United States (428,000), 1854  
 The Crimean War (England and France against Russia), 1854-1856  
 Commodore Perry opened international intercourse with Japan by treaty, 1854  
 Italy joined France in the Crimean War, 1855  
 James Buchanan, president, 1857-1861  
 The Dred Scott decision, 1857  
 The Lincoln-Douglas debates in Illinois, 1858  
 The Atlantic cable laid successfully but not permanently, 1858  
 Abolition of serfdom in Russia, 1858-1863  
 John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, 1859  
 Florida, Texas, Iowa, Wisconsin, California, Minnesota, and Oregon, admitted to the Union, between 1840 and 1860



## CHAPTER XXI

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES (1809-1894)

### SUGGESTED READINGS

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. *Poetry*: Old Ironsides, The Last Leaf, My Aunt, Lexington, Latter-Day Warnings, The Chambered Nautilus, Contentment, The Deacon's Masterpiece, The Boys, A Sun-Day Hymn, Brother Jonathan's Lament for Sister Caroline. *Prose*: The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table (fifth paper), Elsie Venner (Chapter I, "The Brahmin Caste of New England").

Also passages as found in such collections as the following:

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 443-475. Ginn and Company.

BOYNTON, P. H. *American Poetry*, pp. 421-447. Charles Scribner's Sons.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings in American Literature*, pp. 480-507. Ginn and Company.

FOERSTER, NORMAN. *Chief American Prose Writers*, pp. 569-619. Houghton Mifflin Company.

PAGE, C. H. *Chief American Poets*, pp. 355-409. Houghton Mifflin Company.

STEDMAN, E. C. *An American Anthology*, pp. 153-162. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Read "Old Ironsides" and Freneau's "Ode on the Frigate Constitution," both written about the same ship. Would such an appeal for the saving of a battleship be effective now?

Does Holmes's chapter on "The Brahmin Caste in New England" throw any light on his writing of "The Last Leaf"? What is the connection?

Read "The Deacon's Masterpiece" just as a jolly story. What features appeal to younger children? Then re-read it as a comment and criticism on the old Puritan creed. What passages bearing on this do children and inattentive adult readers overlook?

Does "Brother Jonathan's Lament" seem to have been written to arouse sectional enmities or to dispel them?

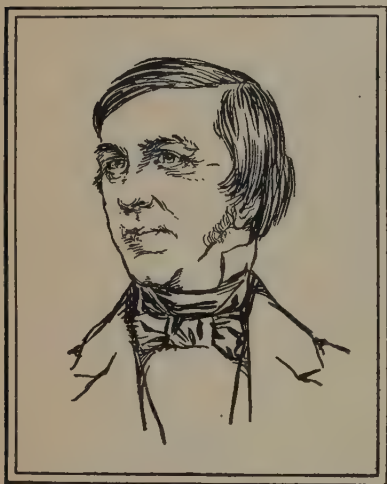
Who is the real speaker in "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," and who in "The De Coverley Papers"? Which series contains more description and narration, and which more discussion of topics of the day? If one is more interesting than the other, can you give the reasons?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Holmes a Boston "Brahmin"
- The life of Holmes
  - School and college days
  - The choice of a profession
  - Early practice of medicine
  - The union of science and literature
- The Boston of Holmes's day
  - Holmes the humorist of the community
  - Holmes the local poet laureate
- The transition from poetry to essay
  - The poems on poetry
- "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table"
  - The structure of the series
  - The range of topics
  - The liberal tone
- Holmes on the Civil War
- Holmes's illustrative method of writing
- Holmes's novels
- Holmes a provincial New Englander

**Holmes a Boston "Brahmin."** In the roster of American men of letters it is hard to think of any other—not forgetting even Whittier—who is so completely the product of a district and the spokesman for it as Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–1894). His whole lifetime was passed in two neighborhoods—that of Harvard College in old Cambridge and that of Beacon Hill in older Boston. He was born in the college town in 1809, the same year with Lincoln. His father, the Reverend Abiel Holmes, was a fine example of the old orthodoxy and of the old breeding. He was an inheritor of the blood of the Bradstreet, Phillips, Hancock, Quincy, and Wendell families, a kind of youth whose "aspect is commonly slender,—his face is smooth,

and apt to be pallid,—his features are regular and of a certain delicacy,—his eye is bright and quick,—his lips play over the thought he utters as a pianist's fingers dance over their music." It was a type for which Holmes felt the greatest respect. He thanked God for the republicanism of nature which every now and then developed a "large, uncombed youth" who strode



OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

An early portrait

awkwardly into intellectual leadership. He acknowledged a Lincoln when he came to maturity, but he expected more of a Chauncey or an Ellery or an Edwards because of the family from which he sprang.

**The life of Holmes—**  
**school and college days.**  
Holmes was brought up in a wide-awake time and place. For a hundred years Harvard had been more liberal than Yale. The separation was already taking place between Unitarian and Trinitarian or Congregational believers. To be sure, the

eyes of Abiel Holmes were focused on the past, and he sent his son to be schooled under the safe influences of Phillips Andover Academy, which was under the wing of the old theological seminary just across the road. But even here Wendell, as he was called, decided against entering the ministry because a certain clergyman "looked and talked so like an undertaker." And when he entered college in his home town, while he took the regular required course of classical languages, history, mathematics, and moral philosophy, the wind from over the sea was blowing through it, and he breathed the atmosphere which was passing into the blood of Emerson and Thoreau and

George Ripley and the other Transcendentalists-to-be. In his college days he was a little, cheerful student of average performance who refused then as always to take himself soberly, although he did not lack inner seriousness. He practiced his gift for writing and was rewarded by having some of his efforts printed in the fashionable annuals of the day—collections of politely sentimental tales, sketches, and poems, in fancy bindings, which ornamented the marble-topped tables in the “best rooms.”

**The choice of a profession.** Under his apparently aimless amiability, however, there was an independence of judgment which was shown when he was twenty years old, and again in the year when he became of age. The first time was on the occasion of an issue in the father's church, when the son was forced to agree with the liberal majority, who literally took the pastor's pulpit from him, so that he had to reëstablish himself in North Cambridge. Few harder tests could be devised than one between loyalty to conviction and loyalty to family interests. The other sign of independence was his choice of a profession. A boy of his blood was almost bound to take up some professional career. If he went to college, assurance was made doubly sure that he would not become a business man. From the outset Holmes rejected the ministry as his calling. He shrank from the formal complexities of the law too. The thought of teaching did not seem to enter his mind. Literature could not afford him a livelihood. By elimination, then, unless he went into business, only medicine was left to him; but in his day medicine was not as dignified as the other professions. Medical science was still in earliest youth, and the practice of “physic” was jointly discredited by the barber, the veterinary, the midwife, the “yarb doctor,” and the miscellaneous quack. This young “Brahmin,” however, saw the chance for contributing to the growth of a budding science, and made his decision with quiet disregard of social prejudice.

**Early practice of medicine.** Study in Paris, successful research work, practice in Boston, and a year's teaching at

Dartmouth College in New Hampshire led to an appointment on the medical faculty at Harvard, which he held actively from 1847 to 1882 and as honorary professor until his death. As a practitioner he was not remarkably successful. At the first his extremely youthful appearance and his jocosity of manner stood in the way. People could not be expected to flock to the office of a young man who was known to have said that "all small fevers" would be gratefully received. And later his interest in literary matters was regarded with distrust by people who were in doubt about consulting him. As a teacher, on the other hand, he was unusually effective because of the traits which made him a poor business-getter. He was lively and deft in his methods. He knew how to put his ideas in order, he was a master hand at expounding them, and he was ingenious in providing neat and amusing formulas for memorizing the myriad details of physiology and anatomy.

**The union of science and literature.** More than any of his fellow writers Holmes was interested in modern science. It supplied him with titles and whole poems, such as "Nux Postcœnatica," "The Stethoscope Song," and "The Mysterious Illness," with literary essays, such as "The Physiology of Versification," and with a whole volume of medical essays. It furnished the motives for his three "medicated novels,"—influence on the unborn child in "Elsie Venner," physical magnetism (by its opposite) in "A Mortal Antipathy," and telepathy in "The Guardian Angel." It was the basis for scores of passages and hundreds of allusions in the four volumes of the Breakfast Table series. And, furthermore, in the natural sympathy which it bred in him for every branch of progressive science, it gave ground for the neat comment: "The union of Science and Literature—a happy marriage, the fruits of which are nowhere seen to better advantage than in our American Holmes." This is not to say that Holmes was alone in his consciousness of science. Thoreau was fully as aware of it in the field of plant and animal study; all things considered, Emerson and Whitman were more responsive to its



deeper implications. It is rather that Holmes was more closely and definitely concerned with it than the others.

**The Boston of Holmes's day.** The Boston to which Holmes removed when he began his professional career was all-sufficing to him for the rest of his life. On Beacon Hill, the stronghold of the old social order, there was an eager, outreaching intellectual life. On its slope was the Boston Athenæum; just below was the Old Corner Book Store. The theaters were rising at its foot. Music and painting thrived modestly, and the traditions of good statesmanship were being maintained by men like Wendell Phillips and Charles Sumner. To cap all, good-fellowship reigned, and many a quiet dinner became a feast of reason and a flow of soul. "Nature and art combined to charm the senses; the equatorial zone of the system was soothed by well-studied artifices; the faculties were off duty, and fell into their natural attitudes; you saw wisdom in slippers and science in a short jacket." Although Holmes did not want it to be taken too seriously, he half meant it when he said, "Boston State-house is the Hub of the Solar System. You couldn't pry that out of a Boston man if you had the tire of all creation straightened out for a crowbar." Moreover, as the half-century of his Boston residence progressed, life became more active there rather than less so. The outstanding leaders, whose names are known to everyone, were surrounded by a large circle of thinking men and women, scores of whom talked well and listened well, and wrote well for the passing reader of the day.

**Holmes the humorist of the community.** In this community Holmes early took his place as the accepted humorist, and for the first twenty-five years he wrote almost entirely in verse. The fact that two of his earliest and most famous poems were anything but funny reënforces the point rather than gainsays it. For the humorist, in contrast to the joker, is a serious man with a special method which he employs usually but not always. If Holmes had not been capable of blazing with the indignation of "Old Ironsides" or glowing with the sympathy

of "The Last Leaf," he would have been a clever dispenser of jollities but not a commentator on life. Much of his youthful composition was of the lighter variety—pleasant extravagances on the level of the "Salmagundi Papers" (see pages 106-107). "The Music Grinders," "The Comet," "Daily Trials," and "The Stethoscope Song" belong in this class. More humorous and less jocose is the verse with a definite satirical turn. "The Ballad of the Oysterman" was a gibe at the sentimental



A ONE-HORSE CHAISE

lays to be found in all the annuals. "My Aunt" hit off the Apollinean Institute type of young ladies' finishing school, to which he returned in a chapter of "Elsie Venner"; the sort of outdated subject to which he returned, too, in his shafts at the Latter-Day Adventists, in "Latter-Day Warnings," and at the decline of Calvinism, in "The Deacon's Masterpiece."

**Holmes the local poet laureate.**<sup>1</sup> At the same time Holmes won a place as the local laureate—for his class of 1829, for Harvard, and for every kind of occasion, grave and gay, on

<sup>1</sup> Poet laureate in England is the poet officially appointed by the crown, as Wordsworth and Tennyson were in their day. In a more informal sense it may mean the recognized poet of a city or district who is usually heard from on public occasions, as Holmes was.

which some appropriate verse could point a moral and adorn the program. This is an easy accomplishment for those who have the gift, but both difficult and dull in the hands of many a poet who is capable of higher things. It needs a fluent pen, ready inventiveness, informality, and a confiding good humor in its oral delivery. These all belonged to Holmes, and not least of them a gracious social manner. It is far easier to underrate this kind of verse than it is to write it frequently and well.

**Transition from poetry to essay—the poems on poetry.** Twice in his early manhood he wrote in verse on the theory of poetry. The first, in 1836, when he was entering the medical profession, was his Phi Beta Kappa poem "Poetry"; the second was "Urania," in 1846, shortly before he accepted his Harvard professorship. In old age he looked back on the earlier of the two, an ambitious effort, with kindly indulgence, allowing it to stand, although it was so evidently the product "of a young person trained after the schools of classical English verse as represented by Pope, Goldsmith, and Campbell, with whose lines his memory was early stocked." When, however, he wrote "Urania, a Rhymed Lesson," he wore a friendly smile and did his teaching in a less pretentious way. He knew his audience, he said, and he knew that they all expected to be amused.

I know a tailor, once a friend of mine  
Expects great doings in the button line,—  
For mirth's concussions rip the outward case,  
And plant the stitches in a tenderer place,  
I know my audience,—these shall have their due;  
A smile awaits them ere my song is through!

But, he went on to say, he knew himself too, and he proposed no more to be the buffoon than to be the savage satirist. Beneath his smiles there was a kindly seriousness. A dozen years later, in the fifth of the "Autocrat" papers, he put the case in a little allegory, the end of which is worth quoting in full.

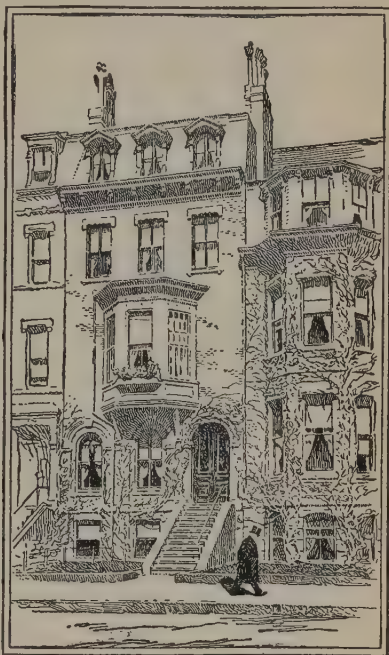
The stone is ancient error. The grass is human nature borne down and bleached of all its color by it. The shapes which are found beneath are the crafty beings which thrive in darkness, and the weaker organisms kept helpless by it. He who turns the stone over is whosoever puts the staff of truth to the old lying incubus, no matter whether he do it with a serious face or a laughing one. The next year stands for the coming time. Then shall the nature which had lain blanched and broken rise in its full stature and native hues in the sunshine. Then shall God's minstrels build their nests in the hearts of a new-born humanity. Then shall beauty—Divinity taking outlines and color—light upon the souls of men as the butterfly, image of the beatified spirit rising from the dust, soars from the shell that held a poor grub, which would never have found wings, had not the stone been lifted.

By these stages, then, Holmes concluded that he was an essayist and developed into one. The "Poetry" of 1836 was subtitled "A Metrical Essay," and it was, without intending to be, distinctly prosy. "Urania," of 1846, was self-described as "A Rhymed Lesson" and affected to be nothing more. At last "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" resorted frankly to prose and won a wider reputation for Holmes than all the foregoing verse had done. The young person trained through the reading of the poets Pope, Goldsmith, and Campbell was in the end fitted to do his best work after the manner of essayists like Addison, Goldsmith, and Lamb. After the appearance of "The Autocrat" Holmes's verse was slighter in bulk and in importance than his prose.

"The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table"—the structure of the series. With Lowell's acceptance of the *Atlantic* editorship he had set the prime condition that Holmes should become a regular contributor, and it is evident from the motto on the title-page of the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," when it appeared in book form,—"Every man his own Boswell,"—that Holmes's conversation had furnished the suggestion for the series. The vehicle was perfectly adapted to the load it was devised to carry. The introduction of a chief

spokesman in a loosely organized group made way for the casual drift from topic to topic. At a boarding-house one speaker could dominate as he hardly could have in any social group. The fact that the group kept meeting from day to day gave a chance for characterization and for the spinning of a slight narrative thread comparable to those on which "The Citizen of the World" and the "De Coverley Papers" were strung. And the chief speaker, autocrat that he was, could give vent to his thoughts on the universe without let or hindrance, and when the whim seized him could impose his latest poems upon his fellow boarders. From the publication of the first number Lowell's judgment was proved wise, with the result not only that the Autocrat spoke through twelve issues but that the thread of his discourse was continued with "The Professor at the Breakfast Table," in 1859, was resumed with "The Poet at the Breakfast Table," in 1871, and was not concluded until the conversations "Over the Teacups," in 1890.

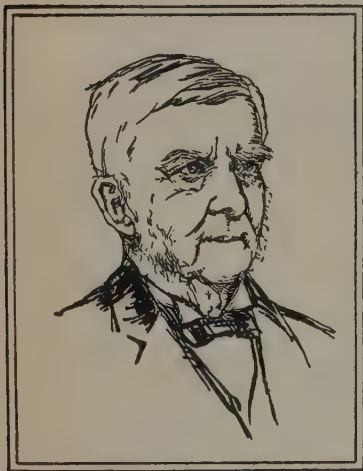
**The range of topics.** The range of topics cannot be better shown than by reference to the index to "The Autocrat" in book form—and the original edition was extraordinary in its day for having one. The "A's," for example, include abuse of all good attempts, affinities, antipathies, age, animal under



A MORNING WALK, NOVEMBER, 1893



air-pump, the American a reënforced Englishman, the effect of looking at the Alps, the power of seeing analogies, why anniversaries are dreaded by the professor, the arguments which spoil conversation, the forming American aristocracy, the use of stimulants by artists, the effect of meeting one of heaven's assessors, and so on. The order in which they



OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

A later portrait

fall is hardly more casual than in the index. Witness the eleventh paper: puns, the "Deacon's Masterpiece," slang, dandies, aristocracy, intellectual green fruit, Latinized diction (with the verses "Æstivation"), sea-shore and mountains, summer residences, space, the Alps, moderate wishes (with the verses "Contentment"), faithfulness in love, picturesque spots in Boston, natural beauties in a city, dusting a library, experiencing life, a proposal of marriage. The difference between the structure of "The Autocrat" pa-

pers and that of the formal essay is simply that they meander like a stream instead of following a fixed course like a canal.

**The liberal tone.** The later numbers of the series, and particularly the third and fourth, clearly reflect the thinking of the period. By nature Holmes was a liberal but not a reformer. He took no active part in "movements," though he sympathized with many of them and with the intentions of their wiser promoters. At the same time he preferred for his own part to induce and persuade people into new paths rather than to shock and offend them while they were still treading the old ones. There is a note of considerate caution in his

reception of new ideas. He was the type of man who will always be unsatisfactory to extremists,—too progressive for the hidebound conservative and too cautious for the extreme radical. His open-mindedness is charmingly demonstrated in the book of his old age, "Over the Teacups." Few men of eighty succeed in keeping their eyes off the past and their voices from decrying the present, but Holmes in his latest years was as interested in the developments of the day as he had been when in the prime of life.

**Holmes on the Civil War.** The issues of the Civil War—to return from the tea table to the breakfast room—showed that Holmes had not lost the spark for righteous indignation in the thirty years since the writing of "Old Ironsides." "The Statesman's Secret" was not as effective a protest at Webster's Seventh of March Speech (1850) as Whittier's "Ichabod," but it was quite as sincerely outspoken. "Non-Resistance" and "The Moral Bully" prove that Holmes was as little of a peace-at-any-price man as Lowell. "Brother Jonathan's Lament for Sister Caroline" was written in deep sorrow that the war had come, but "To Canaan" was militant to the highest degree. Two other poems, written in the years of the Autocrat and the Poet, both in lofty seriousness, came from "flowering moments of the mind" which lost fewest petals as they were recorded in verse. These were "The Chambered Nautilus" and "A Sun-Day Hymn."

**Holmes's illustrative method of writing.** In all Holmes's writing, whatever the mood or the form, the prevailing method is to pile up illustrations. He is likely to start with an idea, proceed to a simple analysis of it, and expound it by a single comparison elaborated at length or a whole series of them more briefly presented. In the sixth "Autocrat" paper he says, with some show of self-restraint, "There are some curious observations I should like to make . . . but I think we are getting rather didactic." Yet, as a matter of fact, Holmes's method was seldom anything but that of the teacher. He evidently saw at a flash how to communicate the idea, but, as he must

have done hundreds of times in the classroom, he developed it with what was at once spontaneous and painstaking detail. His most famous satires, "My Aunt," "Contentment," and the "Deacon's Masterpiece," are all illustrations of this method. Thus in his "Farewell to Agassiz," before the naturalist left for South America, Holmes mentioned that the mountains were



THE BROOMSTICK TRAIN

awaiting his approval, as were also five other natural objects. He wished the traveler safety from the tropical sun and twenty-two other dangers, and success in finding fossils and seven other things of interest. "Bill and Joe" contains sixty lines built up by the illustrative method on the truth that worldly distinctions disappear for a moment in the light of college friendships. "Dorothy Q" devotes thirty-two lines to the quaint fancy "What would I be if one of my eight great-great-grandmothers had married another man?" and "The Broomstick Train," a hundred and forty-six lines to the conceit "The Salem Witches furnish the power for the trolley cars." In prose his well-known discussion of the typical lecture audience in the sixth "Auto-

crat" is about eight hundred words long: Audiences help formulate lectures. The average is not high. They are awful in their uniformity—like communities of ants—whether in New York, Ohio, or New England—unless some special principle of selection interferes. They include fixed elements in age and in intelligence, making up a compound vertebrate (biological analogy, a term natural to a scientist like Dr. Holmes). Kindly elements in audiences conceded, but on the whole they are depressing.

**Holmes's novels.** Holmes gave the best descriptive term to his novels when he referred to them as "medicated." For the other and more eminent American physician, Weir Mitchell, fiction was a resort to another world, but the author of "Elsie Venner" (1861), the "Guardian Angel" (1867), and "A Mortal Antipathy" (1885) was the essayist-physician carrying his story-telling a little farther than in the conversational series. The plots were supplied by Holmes the Doctor and developed by the Autocrat-Professor-Poet. Several chapters of medical lore were introduced in each book and several more of genial exposition. These latter are like the work of Mrs. Stowe except that their relation to story development is slight or entirely lacking; and in portraying character his best creations, like Mrs. Stowe's, are the homelier New England types.

**Holmes a provincial New Englander.** In the best sense of the word Holmes was a provincial New Englander. He was proud of the traditions of his district, devoted to its welfare, certain of its room for improvement, but sure of its contribution to American character. Although he did not share the deeper enthusiasms of Emerson or even fully understand them, he had much more of the milk of human kindness in him. His "message" and his manner of delivering it were popular. He was not a leader, but he kept up with the times, and he explained the drift of them to many who might not otherwise have perceived what was going on. In the tributes which came from every quarter after his death his geniality was the highest common factor—a wholesome and homely trait which will always be sure of affectionate regard in American literature.



## SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What was there in Holmes's blood and upbringing which tended to make him a conservative? What influences tended to make a liberal of him?

2. Which of the two did his decisions of 1829 and 1830 show him to be? Why did his choice of a profession prove this?

3. Tell in briefest form the chief facts about Holmes's active relation to the science of medicine; about Holmes's literary treatment of the science.

4. Be sure that you understand the distinctions between humor, wit, and jocosity; between satire, parody, and burlesque. Of the latter three terms, which characterizes "Contentment" and which the "Deacon's Masterpiece"?

5. In the passage quoted from "The Autocrat" on page 316, what is used to stand for ancient error, what stands for power of truth, and what for the delusions that thrive in times of ignorance and superstition? Can you apply this allegory to the Salem witchcraft episode (see page 36)? Can you apply it to the overthrow of slavery?

6. In this same passage which sentence has a special application to Holmes as a humorist?

7. What is the point of the subtitle to "The Autocrat"—"Every man his own Boswell"?

8. What are the distinctions between the terms "conservative," "liberal," and "radical" (see page 34)? In which groups would you put the nineteenth-century American men of letters whose works you have studied thus far?

9. Profitable use can be made of the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters XII, XX, and XXV, and Chronological Chart No. II, in answering the following questions:

a. What other Americans were born the year of Holmes's birth? What English man of letters?

b. What English poets who lived and wrote during Holmes's boyhood might naturally have influenced him rather than Pope, Goldsmith, and Campbell, who were poets of earlier days?

c. What is the general relationship in point of time of Holmes's richest period of authorship to those of the authors we have already discussed?

d. In what year was the magazine in which the Autocrat series was published, established?

e. During Holmes's most fruitful period of authorship what English authors were doing important work? What Russian authors? What Norwegian author?



## CHAPTER XXII

### NEW YORK AND WALT WHITMAN (1819-1892)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

WALT WHITMAN. Song of Myself (1, 9, 12, 13, 14, 31, 52); By Blue Ontario's Shore (12). *Inscriptions*: One's Self I Sing; I Hear America Singing. *Calamus*: I Hear It was Charged against Me; Crossing Brooklyn Ferry (1, 3). *Birds of Passage*: Pioneers! O Pioneers! *Drum Taps*: Beat! Beat! Drums!; Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night; Ethiopia Saluting the Colors. *Memories of President Lincoln*: When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd; O Captain! My Captain! *Autumn Rivulets*: There was a Child Went Forth; O Star of France (1870-1871). *Good-Bye, My Fancy!*: Good-Bye, My Fancy!

Passages from such collections as the following:

BOYNTON, P. H. American Poetry, pp. 473-541. Charles Scribner's Sons.

BOYNTON, P. H. Milestones in American Literature, pp. 476-508. Ginn and Company.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. Readings from American Literature, pp. 573-584. Ginn and Company.

PAGE, C. H. Chief American Poets, pp. 532-610. Houghton Mifflin Company.

STEDMAN, E. C. An American Anthology, pp. 221-232. Houghton Mifflin Company.

On pages 340-341 a threefold distinction is made as to Whitman's use of the pronoun "I." It will help to a first acquaintance with him to keep these distinctions in mind from the outset. They should not be forced too hard, for in many cases a single poem will include two or even three of the uses, but, in general, poems from the list above can be grouped as follows:

*Poems on Whitman's personal experience:*

There was a Child Went Forth

Crossing Brooklyn Ferry

I Hear It was Charged against Me

Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night

In these poems can you distinguish between the majority of the passages which deal with his surroundings and associations and a few significant lines which deal with what he gained directly by birth from his parents; that is, the common distinction between heredity and environment?

*Poems on the "average man":*

Song of Myself, sections 1, 9, 12, 13  
 I Hear America Singing  
 Drum Taps  
 One's Self I Sing

In what degree are these very definitely poems on democracy? To what passages in them would a believer in the "divine right of kings" have objected?

*Poems on the poet:*

As I Sat Alone by Blue Ontario's Shore  
 Song of Myself, sections 14, 31, 52  
 A Song  
 Good-Bye, My Fancy!

Which should you judge from these passages that Whitman felt was more important, the thoughts that the poet uttered or the form into which he cast them? In what respects are his ideas about the qualities of the poet not democratic in the most commonly accepted sense of the word?

*Poems on other subjects, largely national:*

Beat! Beat! Drums!  
 Pioneers! O Pioneers!  
 When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd  
 O Captain! My Captain!  
 Ethiopia Saluting the Colors  
 O Star of France!

Is there one of the groups above with which these poems on more national themes are closely and naturally connected? Was Whitman a pacifist?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

**The New York group**

Not born in New York

Did not write on New York themes

Not national in feeling

Aldrich, and the attractions of Boston

Stedman as a product of New York

**Walt Whitman's life to 1855**

Boyhood and early occupations

Newspaper work and travels

Democratic friendships

**"Leaves of Grass" and its reception**

Hospital service and its results

Growth of popularity in later years

**Whitman's poetry: its form**

Conventional meters in Whitman's poetry

Whitman's theory of free, or unconventional, meters

Whitman's choice of words

**Whitman's poetry: the charges of immorality**

Whitman's egotism: his three meanings for "I"

**Whitman's positive beliefs**

In the importance of the poet

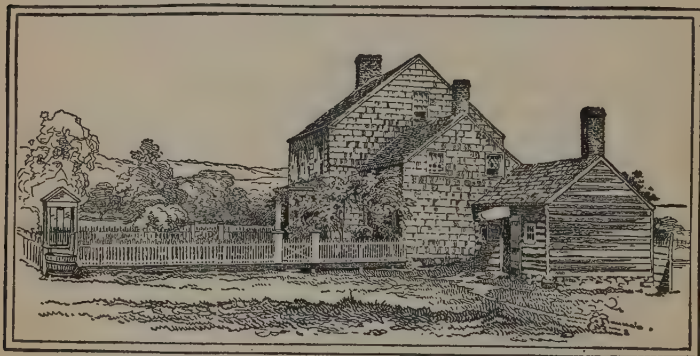
In American democracy

In self-reliance

**Whitman's broad influence**

**The New York group—not born in New York.** In the New York group from 1850 on Bryant was the most eminent figure until his death in 1878. Other well-known writers were Bayard Taylor (1825–1878), Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833–1908), Richard Henry Stoddard (1825–1903), Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836–1907), Walt Whitman (1819–1892, see pages 330–343), William Dean Howells (1837–1920, see pages 395–400), and Richard Watson Gilder (1844–1909). No one of these men was born and bred in New York, and none but Gilder belonged to the town as Irving and Bryant and Halleck had been able to do when it was smaller and less citified. Taylor clung to

the idea of running an expensive country place in Pennsylvania, but lived more or less in New York and buzzed restlessly about the literary market until he died from overwork in 1878. Aldrich, after a few years in New York, retired to Boston, where he was happier, although always consciously a newcomer. Stedman devoted as much time and energy to poetry as his unsuccessful efforts to make a fortune would allow him. Stoddard, who was less ambitious and excited than the others,

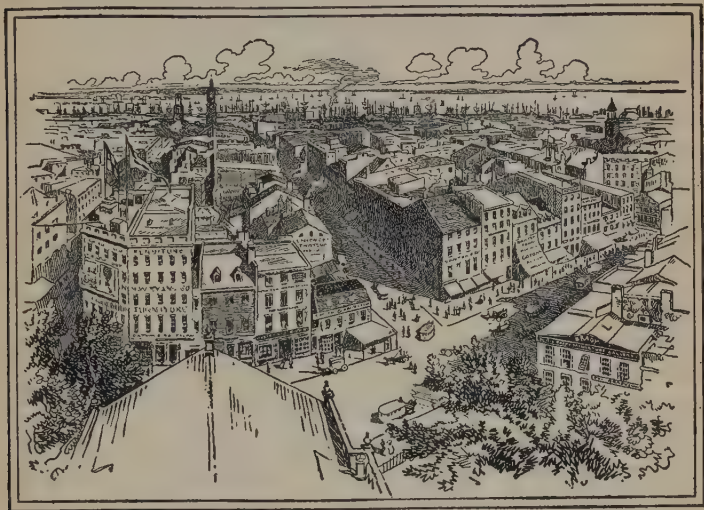


WHITMAN'S BIRTHPLACE, WEST HILLS, LONG ISLAND

held a number of posts with the magazines and newspapers. All these men were in a way the first literary victims of "New-yorkitis." Only Gilder succeeded in holding his own with the great city and in living his life out in the midst of it. The others either left the city or were engulfed by it. They could not enjoy the peace of mind which belonged to their fellow writers in Boston or in Charleston (see page 349), where arts and letters were held in higher honor than business activity. The New England writers of the day had been educated at Harvard and Bowdoin and at certain of the German universities, and the cultured men of Charleston were continually going abroad for study and travel. In the midst of all the hurly-burly of New York there was no outstanding group who chose to devote themselves completely to the finer things in

art and life, and as a result the art and life of New York suffered; for art is a jealous mistress.

**Did not write on New York themes.** In spite of all that had been said for generations about using American subject matter in American literature, these New Yorkers turned altogether away from their own city. Except in rare cases, they did not



NEW YORK CITY, FROM THE STEEPLE OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, 1854

even criticize it. Instead they took refuge in remote times and places. They wrote "Ximen, or the Battle of the Sierra Morena, and Other Poems," "Poems of the Orient," "Königs-mark, and Other Poems," "The Book of the East." The plays were of the same sort. "Tortesa the Usurer," "The Merchant of Bogota," "Francesca da Rimini," and "Leonora, or the World's Own" were the sort American playwrights were usually putting out. "Fashion" and "The Octoroon," on timely American themes, were quite the exception. In New York from 1850 to 1865 Greeley and Bryant, two newspaper editors, were perhaps the leading figures in the literary and intellectual



groups, Willis (see page 164) and Halleck (see page 101) the most popular, Henry Clapp, Jr. and Charles T. Congdon the cleverest, and "Bohemia," with its rallying point at Pfaff's restaurant, the visible gathering-place for the authors.

**Not national in feeling.** Bayard Taylor, in his "John Godfrey's Fortunes" of 1864, characterized them in his discussion of the new weekly, the *Oracle* (actually the *Saturday Press*), which Brandagee (actually Clapp) projected and carried through for two years just before the Civil War. "But the national feeling,—" commenced Mr. Ponder. "Very well for the rural districts; I don't find much of it here," answers Brandagee. "We are cosmopolitan, which is better. If I were beginning in Boston, I'd give you eight columns,—four for the pilgrim fathers, and four for a description of the Common, as viewed from Bunker Hill Monument; or if it were Philadelphia, you should write a solid article, setting down the commercial decline of New York,—but here we care for nothing which does not bring a sensation with it. We are not provincial, not national, not jealous of our neighbors; we live, enjoy, and pay roundly in order to be diverted."

**Aldrich, and the attractions of Boston.** Aldrich gravitated toward this group, but never really belonged to it. Just why he did not can be inferred from a sentence by Howells, whose nature was very like his own: "I remember that, as I sat at that table, under the pavement, in Pfaff's beer-cellar, and listened to the wit that did not seem very funny, I thought of the dinner with Lowell, the breakfast with Fields, the supper at the Autocrat's, and felt that I had fallen very far." It is well to remember, however, that in reply to this and like passages William Winter wrote:

No literary circle comparable with the Bohemian group of that period, in ardor of genius, variety of character, and singularity of achievement, has since existed in New York, nor has any group of writers anywhere existent in our country been so ignorantly and grossly misrepresented and maligned.

Thus the men who gathered at Pfaff's were very conscious of Boston, though their consciousness came out in various ways. The most violent said that the thought of it made them as ugly as sin; others loved it though they left it, as Whitman did "the open road"; and some, on the outskirts of "Bohemia," were not too aggressively like Stedman, who admitted much later, "I was very anxious to bring out my first book in New York in Boston style, having a reverence for Boston, which I continued to have." Aldrich was of like mind, and readily accepted Osgood's invitation to "the Hub" and to the editorship of *Every Saturday*. Years after he wrote from Boston to Bayard Taylor, who could understand:

I miss my few dear friends in New York—but that is all. There is a finer intellectual atmosphere here than in our city. . . . The people of Boston are full-blooded *readers*, appreciative, trained.

And later, to Stedman:

In the six years I have been here, I have found seven or eight hearts so full of noble things that there is no room in them for such trifles as envy and conceit and insincerity. I didn't find more than two or three such in New York, and I lived there fifteen years. It was an excellent school for me—to get out of!

Boston was his native heath, in spite of his own saying: "Though I am not genuine Boston, I am Boston-plated."

**Stedman as a product of New York.** While Aldrich was escaping from the whirlpool, his correspondent Edmund Clarence Stedman was drawn into its depths. In an address at a meeting held in memory of Stedman in January, 1909, Hamilton Mabie struck the main note in two statements: "Mr. Stedman belongs with those who have not only enriched literature with works of quality and substance, but who have represented it in its public relationships," and "Stedman was by instinct and temperament a man of the town." He took the consequences of settling in the business center of the United States. While the members of the Saturday Club were lending

distinction to Boston, the members of the Ornithorhyncus Club and the Bohemians were receiving the impress of New York. Men came to the Saturday luncheons from Salem and Haverhill, Concord, and Cambridge, as well as from neighboring Brookline and Boston itself, but the New York groups lived in literary neighborhoods in the "Unitary Home" or "on the south side of Tenth Street." Thus it came about that Aldrich contributed to Boston what he brought there, but that Stedman was "made in New York."

### WALT WHITMAN (1819-1892)

**Walt Whitman's life to 1855—boyhood and early occupations.** Walt Whitman was born on Long Island in 1819:

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,  
Born here of parents born here, from parents the same, and their  
parents the same.

They were simple, natural, country people,—the mother, mild-mannered and competent, and the father, "strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd, unjust,"—people with the kind of stalwart simplicity who would christen three of their sons Andrew Jackson, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson. Walt was the second of nine children. From boyhood he was quite able to take care of himself—amiable, slow-going, fond of chatting with the common folk of his own kind, and happy out of doors, whether on the beach or among the Long Island hills. At twelve he began to work for his living—in a lawyer's office and a doctor's, in printing shops and small newspaper offices, and in more than one school. Newspaper work included writing as well as typesetting and everything between, and writing resulted in his sending accepted contributions to such respected publications as the *Democratic Review* and George P. Morris's popular *Mirror*.

**Newspaper work and travels.** From 1841 to 1850 he was more steadily using his pen. He wrote some eighteen stories for the periodicals and, though he would not work on the usual

office schedule, he made his way in journalism to the point of becoming editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. In 1848 he moved in a wider orbit, going down to New Orleans through the Ohio valley to work for the new *Crescent*, and coming back by way of the Mississippi and the Great Lakes. In 1850 he was living with his family in Brooklyn. By this time he had done a great deal of reading, starting with the Arabian Nights and Scott, and moving on by his own choice through the classics. Always, when he could, he read alone and out of doors; but seldom has man more completely fulfilled Emerson's advice to compensate for solitude with society, for he was one of the great comrades of history. He found his society in places of his own selection—on the Broadway stages, in the Brooklyn ferryboats, and in the gallery at the Italian opera.

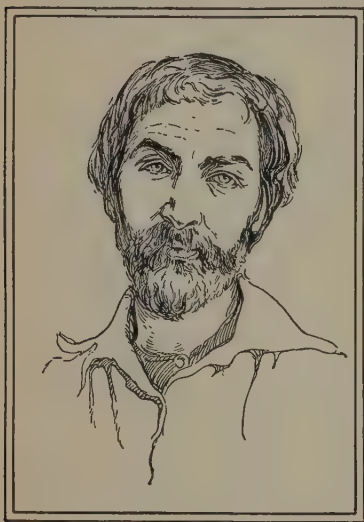
**Democratic friendships.** Here is his own testimony:

. . .—the drivers—a strange, natural, quick-eyed and wondrous race—(not only Rabelais and Cervantes would have gloated upon them, but Homer and Shakspeare would)—how well I remember them, and must here give a word about them. . . . They had immense qualities, largely animal—eating, drinking, women—great personal pride, in their way—perhaps a few slouches here and there, but I should have trusted the general run of them, in their simple good-will and honor, under all circumstances.

And of the harbor: "Almost daily, later ('50 to '60), I cross'd on the boats, often up in the pilot-houses where I could get a full sweep, absorbing shows, accompaniments, surroundings." There was a time when he affected fine clothes, but as he grew older his dress and the dress of his ideas became strikingly informal, more like that of his comrades.

Of the five years before the "Leaves of Grass" appeared, too little is known. At thirty-one he was a natural Bohemian, independent enough not even to do the conventional Bohemian things like drinking and smoking; but he had shown no marked promise of achieving anything more than to live his life as independently as Thoreau was doing. His writing and public

speaking had been commonplace and his newspaper work respectably successful. Then in 1855, unexpectedly to everyone, came proof of a startling development, a development so great and so unusual that it met the fate of its kind, receiving from all but a very few neglect, derision, or contempt.



WALT WHITMAN

A portrait of 1855

**"Leaves of Grass" and its reception.** This was the publication of "Leaves of Grass." John Burroughs tells of the staff of a leading daily paper in New York, assembled on Saturday afternoon to be paid off, greeting the passages that were read aloud to them with "peals upon peals of ironical laughter." Whitman's family were indifferent. His brother George said he "didn't read it at all—didn't think it worth reading—fingered it a little. Mother thought as I did . . . Mother said that if 'Hiawatha' was poetry, perhaps Walt's was."

Obscure young men like

Thoreau and Burroughs were moved to early admiration, but their opinion counted for nothing with the reading public. Emerson was the single man of influence to "greet [Whitman] at the beginning of a great career." The larger public paid no attention to him; the smaller, artistic public condemned him as they always at first condemn a defiantly independent artist. Whitman made sure of this sort of reception when he wrote,

Bearded, sunburnt, gray-neck'd, forbidding, I have arrived,  
To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prizes of the universe,  
For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them.



In 1856, in a new form and with added material but under the same title, there came a second edition that received more attention and correspondingly more abuse. Emerson wrote to Carlyle:

One book, last summer, came out in New York, a nondescript monster, which yet had terrible eyes and buffalo strength, and was indisputably American—which I thought to send you; but the book throve so badly with the few to whom I showed it, and wanted good morals so much, that I never did. Yet I believe now again I shall.

In the meanwhile the ultrarespectable of the Jaffrey Pyncheon type (see page 237) were eager to hound Whitman and his publishers out of society. Undoubtedly the advertising given by his enemies contributed no little to the circulation of the third and again enlarged edition of 1860. Of this between four and five thousand copies were sold in due time.

**Hospital service and its results.** In 1862, when his brother George was seriously wounded at Fredericksburg, Whitman became a hospital nurse in Washington. With his peculiar gifts of comradeship and his lifelong acquaintance with the common man, he was able to give thousands of sufferers the kind of personal, affectionate attention that helped all who were not dying, to fight their way to recovery. From every side has come testimony about his unique relationship with the wounded.

Never shall I forget one night when I accompanied him on his rounds through a hospital, filled with those wounded young Americans whose heroism he has sung in deathless numbers. There were three rows of cots, and each cot bore its man. When he appeared, in passing along, there was a smile of affection and welcome on every face, however wan, and his presence seemed to light up the place as it might be lit by the presence of the Son of Love. From cot to cot they called him, often in tremulous tones or in whispers; they embraced him, they touched his hand, they gazed at him. . . . He did the things for them which no nurse

or doctor could do, and he seemed to leave a benediction at every cot as he passed along. The lights had gleamed for hours in the hospital that night before he left it, and as he took his way towards the door, you could hear the voice of many a stricken hero calling, "Walt, Walt, Walt, come again! come again!"

The fruits in poetry from these years of intense hard work were in some ways the richest of his lifetime. They were included in the edition of 1865 under the title "Drum Taps." Here were new poems "of the body and of the soul," telling of his vigils on the field and in the hospital, not shrinking from details of horror and death; and here also were poems that dealt with the theory of war and of nations in arms. "Drum Taps"—the title poem—and "Beat! Beat! Drums!" sound the call to battle. "The Song of the Banner at Daybreak" contrasts the patriotism of the profiteer with the patriotism of the idealist. "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" sings of America for the world, with its thrillingly prophetic fourth stanza,

Have the elder races halted?

Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied, over there beyond  
the seas?

We take up the task eternal, and the burden, and the lesson,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

And "President Lincoln's Burial Hymn" ("When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd") with "O Captain! My Captain!" are two of the most beautiful among the multitude of songs in praise of Lincoln. Whitman wrote fairly in a letter:

The book is therefore unprecedentedly sad (as these days are, are they not?), but it also has the blast of the trumpet and the drum pounds and whirrs in it, and then an undertone of sweetest comradeship and human love threads its steady thread inside the chaos and is heard at every lull and interstice thereof. Truly also, it has clear notes of faith and triumph.

There were other fateful fruits of his hospital service. It is the protection of the surgeon and the nurse that they adopt a

professional attitude toward their tasks; in their struggle to save human life they deal with "cases," which do not exhaust them by pulling on their sympathies. But it was the essence of Whitman's work among the soldiers that he should pour out his compassion without reserve. The drain of energy forced him more than once to leave Washington for rest at home, and assisting at operations resulted in poisonous contagions. He seemed to recover from these, only to give way in 1873 to a consequent attack of paralysis, and though he had nineteen years to live, he was never quite free from the threat of a return.

**Growth of popularity in later years.** During the later years, however, public respect increased as his strength waned. This self-elected poet of the people never gained popularity, but he became a poet's poet. A spread of the study of Whitman developed among the consciously literary, just as a Browning vogue did in the same decades. It is rather a misfortune than otherwise for any art or artist to be made the subject of a fad, but the growth of Whitman's repute was slow and was based on the respect of other artists. In the years near 1870 essays and reviews in England and Germany showed how deeply "Leaves of Grass" impressed the small group of men who knew what the essentials of poetry were, and were not afraid to acknowledge their great debt to this strange innovator. The timid culture of America at first shrank as usual from any native work which was un-European in its dress, and lagged behind foreign approval of something freshly American, just as it did in the cases of Mark Twain and Joaquin Miller (see pages 370 and 386). When it did begin to take Whitman seriously, the heartfelt admiration of well-known foreign critics, the published charge that America was neglecting a great poet, and the public offer of assistance from English friends stirred readers to a tardy and shamefaced show of interest, and combined to build up for "the good gray poet" a body of support. From 1881 to his death eleven years later the income from his writings was sufficient to maintain him in "decent poverty."

**Whitman's poetry : its form.** In "Myself and Mine" Whitman delivered a warning in spite of which he has been discussed in a whole alcoveful of books and in countless lectures :

I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends, but  
listen to my enemies, as I myself do,  
I charge you forever reject those who would expound me, for I  
cannot expound myself,  
I charge that there be no theory or school founded out of me;  
I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.

From the beginning Whitman has thus been a kind of storm-center of discussion; and the discussion has gathered chiefly around two subjects: first, objections to his way of living and style of writing; and second, valuations of what he thought and wrote, apart from their form.

**Conventional meters in Whitman's poetry.** Prejudice and ignorance have had altogether too much to say about Whitman's poetic style—as they still have about the freer verse-forms of today (see page 152, footnote). Two or three simple facts should be stated at the outset, by way of clearing the ground. His earliest poetry was written in conventional form; the form of "Leaves of Grass" was not the result of laziness or of inability to write in the fashion. Way on to the end of his career Whitman cast his verse from time to time in regular rimed measures. "O Captain! My Captain!" (1865) and "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors" (1870) are deliberate returns to the old ways.

Passages that are more likely to escape the attention are rhythmic verses—often disguised by the way they are printed—scattered through poems in Whitman's usual manner. Here is a bit from the opening of the "Song of the Broadaxe":

Wooded flesh and metal bone! limb only one and lip only one!  
Gray-blue leaf by red heat grown, helve produced from a little  
seed sown!  
Resting the grass amid and upon,  
To be lean'd and to lean on.

This is in six measures of four stresses each with a single rime, and the measures, although they are all equal, are sometimes printed as whole lines and sometimes as halves. Or note the first four lines in section 14 of the "Song of Myself":

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,  
*Ya-honk* he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation,  
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,  
Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.



CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY, 1853

This, of course, is a perfectly regular quatrain of seven-stressed lines, but it is preceded and followed by quite different and quite irregular rhythms.

**Whitman's theory of free, or unconventional, meters.** Whitman had worked out a theory for his art, and referred to his lines as apparently "lawless at first perusal, although on closer examination a certain regularity appears, like the recurrence of lesser and larger waves on the sea-shore, rolling in without intermission, and fitfully rising and falling." His feeling was that the form into which poetry is cast should shift from moment to moment with the ideas expressed, because any pattern



imposed on a long poem must hamper the poet's freedom of utterance. In many and many a descriptive passage of Whitman's there is a succession of nice adjustments of word and rhythm to the thing described. The flight of birds, the play of waves, the swaying of branches, the thousand variations of mechanical motion, he felt and reproduced. Here, for example, is a passage from "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" printed not as Whitman put it on the page, but so as to set off the different groupings of three, four, five, six, and seven stressed units, each unit being devoted to a separate part of the whole scene:

I too many and many a time crossed the river of old,  
    Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls,  
    saw them high in the air  
    floating with motionless wings,  
    oscillating their bodies,  
    Saw how the glistening yellow  
    lit up the parts of their bodies  
    and left the rest in strong shadow,  
    Saw the slowing-wheeling circles  
    and the gradual edging toward the south,  
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,  
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,  
    Looked at the fine centrifugal spokes  
    of light round the shape of my head in the sunlit water  
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and southwestward  
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,  
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving, etc., etc.

This, it ought to be admitted, is an unusually fine passage, for Whitman was like all his fellow-poets in being uneven in his performance. Yet he wrote scores upon scores of passages that were full of splendor, of majesty, of rugged strength, of tender loveliness. In general it is true that the lines that were written in description of actual things and scenes, like those just quoted, are the most effective; but in many poems or sections of poems on abstract ideas Whitman has been no less skillful, as, for example, writing of his own self-reliance:

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,  
 I laugh at what you call dissolution,  
 And I know the amplitude of time.

**Whitman's choice of words.** Whitman was just as conscious in his choice of words as in his selection of rhythms. Poetry, he agreed with Wordsworth, was choked with outworn phrases; the language of the people should be the language of poetry. From this he could derive a "perfectly clear, plate-glassy style." Yet in respect to diction, as in respect to versification, Whitman was uneven. It would be foolish to defend the worst in his pages. He wrote homely passages, and he fell into strange word usages, particularly when he went out of his way to use—and to misuse—foreign words and to coin others that do not exist in any language.

There are good English equivalents for *omnes* and *allons* and *dolce* and *résumé*, and better ones than *promulge*, *philosoph*, and *imperturbe*.

**Whitman's poetry: the charges of immorality.** The harshest attacks launched at Whitman in his own time took the ground that he was the author of immoral writings. This was because of his unusual frankness for those days in mentioning the im-



NEW YORK WATERFRONT TODAY

From a painting by Thornton Oakley

pulse and the acts that lead to fatherhood and motherhood. Three brief comments are perhaps all that such a chapter as this needs to include. The first is that in the nineteenth century the general habit of enforced silence on those matters led many people to talk and act as if they were shameful rather than sacred. The second is that, even admitting this, Whitman sometimes violated not good morals but good taste in going into details which have no place in public discussion. There are many intimate facts of a personal and family nature that do not belong in the talk of the town. And the third is that the present generation should be very slow to condemn Whitman on these grounds unless it is willing to include in the verdict a large proportion of present-day playwrights, novelists, and poets who are quite as reproachable as Whitman was and often far more persistent.

**Whitman's egotism: his three meanings for "I."** The only other charge against Whitman worth mentioning—the complaint at his "colossal egotism"—is a subject more to explain than to defend. When Whitman used the word "I" he did not always mean the same thing. Sometimes, like the ordinary man of the street, he meant his own definite self:

I, now, thirty-six years old, in perfect health, begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

More often, and just as definitely, he meant the average man. This he explained in the preface to the 1876 edition: "I meant 'Leaves of Grass' as published, to be the poem of average Identity (of *yours*, whoever you are, now reading these lines). . . . To sing the Song of that law of average Identity, and of Yourself, consistently with the divine law of the universal, is a main purpose of these 'Leaves.'" And thus he writes in the "Song of Myself":

In all people I see myself—none more, and not one a barleycorn  
less;  
And the good or bad I say of myself, I say of them.

Finally, the egotistic "I" in Whitman is most often the natural speech of the prophet, for Whitman had the voice and the manner and the message of the prophet. When Amos composed his threefold Old Testament poem, for example, he opened the first part with "Thus saith the Lord"; the second with "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you"; and the third with "Thus the Lord God shewed me." Whitman was no less certain of his own inspiration. He had, he said, "an intuition of the absolute balance in time and space, of the whole of this multifarious, mad chaos of fraud, frivolity, hoggishness—this revel of fools, and incredible make-believe and general unsettledness, we call *the world*." He had had, he felt, a vision which made him understand the whole plan of the universe, from the laws that controlled the stars to the little details of daily life.

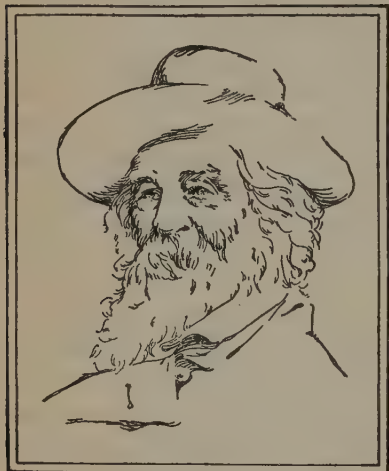
Whitman's positive beliefs in the importance of the poet. In his sense, of course, Whitman was a "colossal egotist," as all great artists are. He was just as certain that he was a bard with a special gift of wisdom as that he was an average man with the average man's ways of feeling and acting; and he wrote of the bard:

He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportion, neither  
more nor less,  
He is no arguer, he is judgment— (Nature accepts him absolutely; )  
He judges not as the judge judges, but as the sun falling round a  
helpless thing;  
As he sees farthest, he has most faith.

It is this sort of belief in himself that leads to such a phrase as "the eccentricity of genius." No genius ever thought, talked, wrote, and lived in an altogether commonplace way. Whitman's egotism would hardly be accepted in the ordinary drawing-room; but Whitman, with all other prophets, poets, and artists, must be judged by other than drawing-room standards. Whitman's vision of life made him certain that there was a plan in the universe and a guiding power, and equally certain that the

"incredible make-believe and general unsettledness" was because of man's interference with God's will.

Whitman's belief in American democracy. He felt sure that the one fit way to carry out such a design was by means of the purest sort of democracy; that all other kinds of government



WALT WHITMAN

A later portrait

were only temporary obstacles in the course of things. And as Whitman saw the nearest approach to this sort of government in his own country, he was an American by belief as well as by the accident of place. Governments, he felt, were necessary conveniences, and so-called rulers were only servants of the public, who granted them certain limited powers. The greatest power in life, he thought, was the public opinion which he as a bard was always trying to inspire and direct. In America, whose "veins are

filled with poetical stuff," Whitman was sure not only of the need of poets but of their immense influence.

Whitman's belief in self-reliance. Whitman arrived at the acme of self-reliance. With the mystic's sense of revealed truth at hand, and a devout conviction that it was the poet's duty—his duty—to show men a new heaven and a new earth, he went on his way with perfect faith. Emerson wrote of self-reliance in general, "Adhere to your act, and congratulate yourself if you have done something strange and extravagant, and broken the monotony of a decorous age." Yet he remonstrated with Whitman, and in the attempt to modify his extravagance used arguments which were unanswerable.



"Nevertheless," said the younger poet, "I felt down in my soul the clear and unmistakable conviction to disobey all, and pursue my own way"; in doing which he bettered Emerson's instructions by disregarding his advice. Hostile or brutal criticism left him quite unruffled. It reaffirmed him in his conclusions and cheered him with the thought that they were receiving serious attention. After Swinburne's fiercest attack, says Burroughs: "I could not discover either in word or look that he was disturbed a particle by it. He spoke as kindly of Swinburne as ever. If he was pained at all, it was on Swinburne's account and not on his own. It was a sad spectacle to see a man retreat upon himself as Swinburne had done."

**Whitman's broad influence.** It is impossible, as all critics agree, to compass Whitman in a book or essay or compress him into a summary. He was an immensely expansive personality whose writings are as broad as life itself. It is almost equally impossible for one who has really read over and through and under his poems to speak of him in measured terms. The world is coming round to Whitman much faster than he expected. Every great step in human progress is a step in the direction he was pointing. His larger faith, whether so recognized or not, is yearly the faith of more and more thinking people. And in an immediate way his influence on the generation of living poets is incomparably great.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What were some differences between New York and Boston as literary centers in the middle of the nineteenth century?

2. For varying sentiments about "Bohemia" see the following passages: Ferris Greenslet's "Life of Thomas Bailey Aldrich," pp. 37-47; W. D. Howells's "Literary Friends and Acquaintances," pp. 68-76; Stedman and Gould's "Life of Edmund Clarence Stedman," pp. 208, 209; William Winter's, "Old Friends," pp. 291-297.

3. What was the extent of Whitman's early travels, and what experiences among men served with him as substitutes for travel?

4. What was the reading public's attitude toward "Leaves of Grass" when it first appeared?

5. What connection did Whitman have with the Civil War? What was the corresponding connection for many men in the World War? What poems were drawn from his war experience?

6. How did Whitman illustrate the old adage about the "prophet without honor"?

7. What passage quoted from Whitman in the text proves that he was not intending to found a school of poetry.

8. Read, "O Captain! My Captain!" and note the conventional form in which it was cast, together with the striking exceptions in connection with the rime scheme.

9. Find, if you can, brief passages, other than those quoted in the text, of regular rhythms in the midst of free-verse poems.

10. Select brief passages in which there is a clear and fine relationship between the rhythm used and the subject of the passages.

11. Read any fifty lines you choose from Whitman with reference to his use of the average man's speech and his use sometimes of foreign words, corrupted words, and coined words.

12. What were the three senses in which Whitman used the word "I" in his poetry?

13. Turn to some of the opening passages in the Old Testament prophecies and parallel the passages from the book of Amos quoted in the text.

14. From your study of literary history or your knowledge of artists can you recall different illustrations of the "eccentricities of genius"?

15. What connection was there between Whitman's belief in the average man and his general theories about rulers and governments?

16. What was there in his theory of the bard as quoted in the text which would account for his attitude toward Emerson's advice and Swinburne's hostile criticisms?

17. In answering the following questions the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters XX and XXV, and Chronological Chart No. II, will be found helpful:

a. What other poet's birth and death dates are within a year of being the same as Whitman's? Compare their most fruitful periods of authorship in point of time. (See Chronological Chart No. II.)

b. The lives of two poets we have already discussed inclose Whitman's life. Compare their most important periods of authorship with his.

c. What important work of Longfellow's appeared the same year as Whitman's "Leaves of Grass"? How much earlier than "Leaves of Grass" was the "Scarlet Letter"? "Uncle Tom's Cabin"? "Walden"?

d. What historical event do you connect with the year "Drum Taps" was published? Who was Europe's greatest statesman at this time?

e. About the time Whitman's most fruitful period of authorship was closing, what cession of territory took place overseas that figured largely in the World War?

# CHAPTER XXIII

## THE POETRY OF THE SOUTH

### SUGGESTED READINGS

- HENRY TIMROD. Sonnet—"I know not why, but all this weary day";  
Ethnogenesis; 1866: Address to the Old Year.
- PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE. A Dream of the South Winds, The Mocking-  
Bird, Under the Pine, The Snow-Messengers.
- SIDNEY LANIER. The Symphony, Sonnets of Columbus, Songs of the  
Chattahoochee, The Bee, The Revenge of Hamish, The Marshes of  
Glynn.

Passages from such collections as the following:

- BOYNTON, P. H. Milestones in American Literature, pp. 509-549. Ginn  
and Company.
- BOYNTON, P. H. American Poetry, pp. 342-366, 449-472. Charles Scrib-  
ner's Sons.
- CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. Readings from American Liter-  
ature, pp. 584-590, 595-601. Ginn and Company.
- PAGE, C. H. Chief American Poets, pp. 611-634. Houghton Mifflin Com-  
pany.
- STEDMAN, E. C. An American Anthology, pp. 314-320, 433-440. Houghton  
Mifflin Company.

Try to summarize in a topic or short sentence each of the four parts  
of "Ethnogenesis." What are the defenses of slavery in the third?  
What is the national ideal in the fourth?

Which of the three tributes by Hayne to fellow poets seems to you  
the most attractive, and why?

What sins does Lanier charge to trade in "The Symphony" (ll.  
18-63 and 191-206)? What form of trade may he have had especially  
in mind in the South? What is the remedy he offers?

What lines in the "Song of the Chattahoochee" show the most  
skillful adaptation of sound to sense?

Lanier studied long to make lines 39-50 in "The Bee" faithful both to  
nature and to his idea of the poet. Is the metaphor an effective one?

Read "The Revenge of Hamish" as an illustration of a story told just for its own sake with no attempt to apply a moral.

Read "The Marshes of Glynn," keeping in mind the comparison with "Thanatopsis" mentioned on page 361.

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

Smallness of literary output in the South

Reasons for little writing and publishing

Support of theaters, colleges, and periodicals

The literary circle in Charleston, South Carolina

Henry Timrod

As a product of the South

As a Confederate poet

Paul Hamilton Hayne

Sidney Lanier

Ancestry, home influence, and education

War experience and its effects on authorship

His return to music

Lanier and the "New South"

The appointment to Johns Hopkins University

Lanier's respect for the poet as a leader

Lanier as a teacher-poet

Lanier as a musician-poet

Lanier as a poet of religion

Conclusion

**Smallness of literary output in the South.** The omission of Southern writers for nearly two centuries in a history of American literature is likely to mislead the unthinking reader. Certain qualifying facts should be reckoned with in drawing any conclusions. The first and most specific is that Poe, although born in Boston and largely active in Philadelphia and New York, belongs to the South. His poems and tales are without time and space, but his criticisms are often vigorously sectional; yet he was really an isolated character, speaking for himself without associates or disciples.

**Reasons for little writing and publishing.** There are two main reasons for the comparative withdrawal of the South during a long period from the writing and publishing of poems,



essays, and stories. One is the general nature of the early settlement (see pages 4, 6, 7). The spread of the population over a wide area with the lack of large towns gave no encouragement to printers and publishers before the Revolution and furnished no such gathering-places as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Literature, like all the other arts, thrives best in fellowship. The other is that with the Revolution and after it the richest culture of the South devoted itself to statesmanship and expressed itself in oratory. John Adams of Massachusetts, whose mind ran solely to government problems, regretted that he had no leisure for the arts (see page 78), but Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, his successor in the White House, was a creative educator, a linguist, an architect, and a student of music. Southern gentlemen from the days of Jefferson and Madison to those of Abraham Lincoln read "Mr. Addison" and "Mr. Steele" and "Mr. Pope," fashioned their speech and writing after those courtly models, and, when they wrote at all, often passed their manuscripts round among their friends or had them privately printed, not submitting them to the sordid touch of the publisher.

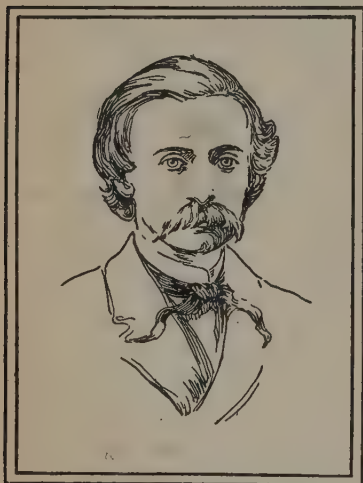
**Support of theaters, colleges, and periodicals.** Moreover, the literary activity of the South is shown in the history of the American theater. The earliest theatrical "seasons" of which there is record came in Southern towns in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. The Hallam company of players, arriving from England in 1752, secured their first hearing in Maryland and Virginia. Smaller Southern communities held their own with New York and Philadelphia in the patronage of the stage, though surviving Puritan prejudice was making New England a rocky field for the drama until well into the next century. Again, the founding of the University of Virginia, long preëminent among Southern colleges, was a doubly important event in American education, for it was first among state universities, with a course of study far more modern than in any Northern college. Finally, journalism was not neglected in the South, keeping pace with the progress in the rest of the

country; and the *Southern Literary Messenger* (1834-1865) held an enviable place among American periodicals during its thirty years of life.

**The literary circle in Charleston, South Carolina.** From 1850 the natural course of events in the South began to develop literary centers of which Charleston, South Carolina, was the most notable. At this date William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870) was in the high prime of life and was the unchallenged leader by virtue of age, literary reputation, and personal force. He had appeared before the public with two volumes of poems in 1827, and had gone on to the writing of adventure stories at the rate of more than a book a year. He was an aboundingly vigorous, somewhat turbulent man, with a gift for talk and a very generous interest in all men of literary feeling or promise. Around him and John Russell, the bookseller, there gathered a group who became for Charleston what the frequenters of the Old Corner Book Store were to Boston, and rather more than what the "Bohemians" of Pfaff's restaurant were to New York. Russell's became a meeting-place for the best people during the daytimes—perhaps to buy, perhaps only to talk—and in the evenings the men gathered in the spirit of a literary club, though without organization or name. *Russell's Magazine* was the natural fruit of the group-spirit developed here, just as the *Atlantic Monthly* (see page 286) was of similar associations in Boston or as the *Dial* had been of the Transcendental Club in 1840 (see page 185). It was a further consequence of this plowing of the cultural soil that two Charleston boys, born in 1829 and 1830, were encouraged as young men not only to write but to publish their poems, and that one became the first editor and the other a frequent contributor to the new magazine. These were Henry Timrod and Paul Hamilton Hayne.

**Henry Timrod (1829-1867)**—as a product of the South. Of the two friends, Timrod, the one who showed promise of finer things, was the victim of an early death. As a youth he was given to the extreme seriousness and the grave extrava-

gances of the growing poet—traits which are not wholly sacrificed in the grown poet, as they are in the average "sensible" man. His inclination to praise emotion as an end in itself was a sentimental characteristic of the South. In fact "the susceptibility of early feeling" which Irving wished to keep alive (see page 115), and which was the central thread in Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility," was, and still is, a cue to certain



HENRY TIMROD

Southern traits. Whatever may have been the source of Southern speech and manners, they still resemble those which we associate with English literature of the mid-eighteenth century. Both have a touch of courtly formality, a tendency toward the oratorical style, an insistence on honor and chivalry, a display of deference to womanhood and to all beauty, and both are in constant danger from the insincerity that threatens a speech or a literature which is filled with set and often outworn phrases.

Timrod as a youthful versifier passed through his period of unconvincing extravagance, but even in his earlier work showed by occasional flashes that he had his own gift for expression as well as a receptive mind for poetry. In 1859 his first book of poems was published. It had the coveted distinction of the Ticknor and Fields, Boston, imprint,—for these were the publishers by whom every budding poet wanted to be introduced to the literary world,—but it was clearly the utterance of a Charleston poet. The sonnet "I know not why, but all this weary day" is full of genuine feeling, and in its ominous despair foretells the coming war:

Now it has been a vessel losing way,  
Rounding a stormy headland ; now a gray  
Dull waste of clouds above a wintry main ;  
And then, a banner, drooping in the rain,  
And meadows beaten into bloody clay.

**Timrod as a Confederate poet.** Timrod's two greater poems were dedicated to the Confederacy. They are the outpourings of loyalty to the shortlived nation, full of passion, no freer from hate and backbiting than the average poems from the North, but positive in their ardent faith in the fine part the Confederacy was to play in future history. Like all other war poets he suffered from the embittering effects of the conflict. Even in "The Cotton Boll" and in "Ethnogenesis" he saw red at times, as any human partisan was bound to do ; but his first inclination was to think more about his hopes for the South than about his hatred of the North. The newly federated South was to send out from its whitened fields an idealized cotton crop that "only bounds its blessings by mankind." The labors of the planter were to strengthen the sinews of the world. Yet into this finely generous mood came the bitter thought of the war which was in progress, and in a moment he was raging at the "Goth" in the same breath that he was resolving to be merciful. As a personal sufferer Timrod endured without flinching. As a Confederate patriot he dreamed

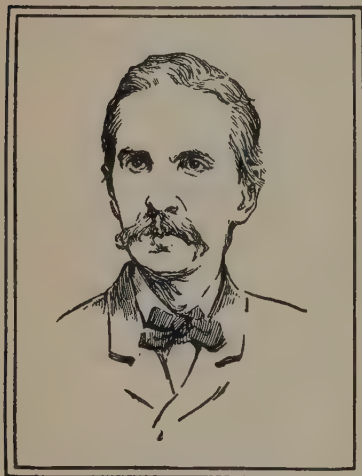
Not only for the glories which the years  
Shall bring us ; not for lands from sea to sea,  
And wealth, and power, and peace, though these shall be ;  
But for the distant peoples we shall bless,  
And the hushed murmurs of a world's distress.

And when the war was over, in his "Address to the Old Year" (1866) he was all for complete and speedy reconciliation.

A time of peaceful prayer,  
Of law, love, labor, honest loss and gain—  
These are the visions of the coming reign  
Now floating to them on this wintry air.

Fortunately, in the slow approach toward this goal, Timrod was spared the brutal blunders of the Reconstruction period, for he died within the next twelvemonth, serene in his hopes.

**Paul Hamilton Hayne (1830–1886).** Paul Hamilton Hayne, a man of moderate talents and of achievement that was greater in bulk than quality, was whole-heartedly devoted to litera-



PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE

ture. With the founding of *Russell's*, while the bookseller supplied the capital and Simms the general stimulus, Hayne was the willing and capable young man to do the editorial drudgery. If the war had not cut short the life of the magazine within three years, Hayne might have had a long and useful career with it. Moreover, the need of criticizing other men's poetry might have refined his own verse and reduced its quantity, as it did for such other editors as Aldrich and Gilder.

But a career like theirs was denied him when *Russell's* was discontinued, and he was forced into the uncertain existence of living by his pen without the assurance of any regular salary. Though this may be a sordid detail, it is not a slight one, for the lack of a certain income not only disturbs the artist's mind but goads him to writing for money rather than for artistic ends. This result is apparent in Hayne's work. He had to force himself, and he wrote in consequence the only kind of poetry that industry and good will can produce.

Much of it was for special occasions. He wrote on demand for everything, from art exhibits to cotton expositions, always conscientiously, without any special depth or charm. He fell



into the conventional nineteenth-century habit of writing on romantic subjects located in parts of the earth which he knew only from books. His best work, of course, sprang more directly from his experience. Some of his war lyrics are stirring, though seldom up to Timrod's best. Some of his protests after the war are spirited, and wholly justified by the stupid clumsiness of the North in their handling of affairs during the Reconstruction period. Among the best of these are "South Carolina to the States of the North" and "The Stricken South to the North." Hayne's tributes to other poets, particularly Longfellow and Whittier, are full of generous admiration, and his nature poems ring finely true. Most of all, the Southern pine fascinated him by its evergreen grace and strength and its mysterious voice.

To be the poet of a class or a district and no more than that is ordinarily not a notable achievement, but Timrod and Hayne represented a period as well as a section. They were products of freshly stirring conditions in the South; before the war they began to sing for a neighborhood that had long been comparatively silent. And when the war came on, and after its conclusion, they were not only its best singers but they were remarkable in war literature for the fineness of their positive spirit and their relative freedom from harsh abuse. They reaped in love and praise the reward that their stricken neighbors could not pay them in money.

**Sidney Lanier (1842-1881)—ancestry, home influence, and education.** Sidney Lanier was born in Macon, Georgia, in 1842. He was therefore twelve or thirteen years younger than Hayne or Timrod, and his productive period came just so much later, namely in the '70's. He could trace his Lanier ancestry back to the court musicians of the Stuart kings and beyond them to a remoter past in France. His mother sang and played in the home, and his father, a courtly and refined lawyer, was a "gentle reader" of the old Southern school. Macon was a town of extreme orthodoxy where "the only burning issues were sprinkling versus immersion, freewill versus predestina-

tion," but where the rigors of religion were offset by innocent merrymaking and the graces of Southern hospitality. From here Lanier went in 1857 to Oglethorpe University, Georgia, as a member of the sophomore class, graduating from the modest college with first honors in 1860. Though successful in scholarship, he had found his chief enjoyments in wide reading of romantic literature and in flute-playing. He was convinced that his talents were in music, but he had the old-fashioned notion that the life of a musician was not serious enough to justify itself. On his appointment as tutor at Oglethorpe he decided to remain in college-teaching, rounding out his preparation by two years at Heidelberg. When the war broke, he seemed to be well started on the path trod by Longfellow and Lowell.

**War experience and its effects on authorship.** In "Tiger Lilies," his early novel, he described how the "afflatus of war" swept the South in 1861, as it swept the whole country again in 1917.

Its sound mingled with the serenity of the church organs and arose with the earnest words of preachers praying for guidance in the matter. It sighed in the half-breathed words of sweethearts, conditioning impatient lovers with war services. It thundered splendidly in the impassioned words of orators to the people. It whistled through the streets, it stole into the firesides, it clinked glasses in barrooms, it lifted the gray hairs of our wise men in conventions, it thrilled through the lectures in college halls, it rustled the thumbed book leaves of the schoolrooms. . . . It offered tests to all allegiances and loyalties,—of church, of state; of private loves, of public devotion; of personal consanguinity, of social ties.

In 1861 Lanier enlisted in the first Georgia regiment to leave for the front. Four years later he returned with health shattered by the hardships of service and of a prison camp.

Even though wrecked in health, he came out from the war saddened but not embittered, and convinced as early as 1867 that the saving of the Union had been worth the struggle.

He insisted that hatreds should be buried in spite of every influence to the contrary. The countryside had been devastated and business brought to a stop. Libraries had been destroyed and colleges closed. As recovery began, the generous influence of Lincoln waned; and the reign of the "carpetbaggers" inflamed the worst elements in the South, drove some of the better in despair to other parts of the country, and reduced the rest to bruised and heartsick indignation. Lanier could not be unaffected by such conditions. He took refuge in grinding work: first in teaching and then in several years of humdrum law work. "Tiger Lilies" was published in 1867 in New York, and a number of poems were printed there in the *Round Table* during 1867 and 1868. But depression and drudgery tended to silence him, and might have done so if the music in him had been stifled with the poetry, and if the poetry had not been revived by the active friendships of two older men, Paul Hamilton Hayne and Bayard Taylor.

**His return to music.** Music gained a new hold on him during an enforced health trip to Texas in the winter of 1872-1873. He had reveled in the concerts he had heard in different visits to New York after the war, but in San Antonio he fell in with a group of musicians for whom he was a player as well as an auditor. Without any formal instruction in the flute he had gained such a command of the instrument that it had become a second voice for him. In the autumn of '73 he met and played for the director of the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, and in December he went in triumph to his initial rehearsal as first flutist in the newly organized Peabody Symphony Orchestra. For the rest of life music was his most reliable means of support and a source of pleasure that amounted to little less than dissipation.

**Lanier and the "New South."** The development of a Baltimore orchestra in 1873 was a sign of the reawakening of artistic life from Baltimore to the Gulf. By 1870 the call was repeatedly sounded for a new literature and a new criticism in the South. Short-lived magazines sprang up and were flooded

with copy before their early deaths. Much was written that was narrowly sectional in tone; but much from men like Hayne and Cable and Page approached the standard set by Joel Chandler Harris in his appeal for a literature which should be "intensely local in feeling, but utterly unprejudiced and unpartisan as to opinions, traditions, and sentiment.



SIDNEY LANIER

Whenever we have a genuine Southern literature, it will be American and cosmopolitan as well." Equally in the interest of the South was Hayne's demand for criticism which should put a stop to the scribblers, who had nothing to say and said it badly. "No foreign ridicule," he wrote in the *Southern Magazine* in 1874, "can stop this growing evil, until our own scholars and thinkers have the manliness and honesty to discourage instead of applauding such manifestations of artistic weakness and artistic plati-

tudes as have hitherto been foisted on us by persons uncalled and unchosen of any of the muses."

At the same time several of the leading Northern editors accepted and even sought contributions from the South. In 1873 *Scribner's Monthly* planned and secured a widely advertised series of articles on "the great South." *Harper's* had a series of its own. The *Atlantic*, with Howells as editor, followed conservatively, and the *Independent* opened its columns to the poetry of the men whom it had harshly condemned a dozen years earlier. More important to Lanier than any of these was *Lippincott's*, in which "Corn," "The Symphony,"

and "The Psalm of the West" were published in 1875, 1876, and 1877—poems by which his wide reputation was won.

The encouragement given him by Hayne in the dark days of the law, when he had no time to write, was followed by a Northern friendship of even greater value to him when the *Lippincott* poems were brought to the kindly attention of Bayard Taylor. This busy and large-hearted man of letters seems to have been the literary friend of his whole generation. He was on friendly terms with the most renowned of his day. He was a companion of publishers, editors, and journalists, and he showed a most generous interest in the fortunes of promising younger men. His literary standing is shown in his place in the ceremonies of the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia in 1876. He wrote the Ode for the Fourth of July celebration (after Bryant, Lowell, and Longfellow had declined the honor), and had sufficient influence to gain for Lanier the distinction of writing the Cantata<sup>1</sup> for the opening ceremonies.

**The appointment to Johns Hopkins University.** Lanier's habits of study led to his appointment as lecturer in English literature at Johns Hopkins University in 1879. He approached his work in high spirits, and, as long as his strength lasted, lectured effectively and studied hard. Now, however, when he was well established in the orchestra and the university, he sank under the strain of all the preceding struggle, and in 1881 he died before reaching his fortieth year.

**Lanier's respect for the poet as a leader.** Lanier agreed with Whitman in putting the poet on the same high level with the prophet and the seer. He was not at all in sympathy with Poe's idea that in poetry intellect and moral sense should be quite subordinate to the feeling for beauty (see page 170). In "Corn" the poet

leads the vanward of his timid time  
And sings up cowards with commanding rhyme.

<sup>1</sup>"Cantata" is the Italian for a song or story set to music. It is usually sung by a chorus and accompanied by an orchestra.



In "The Bee" he will wage wars for the world. In "The Marshes of Glynn" he is

the catholic man who hath mightily won  
God out of knowledge and good out of infinite pain.

The poet's judgments are, therefore, he felt, certain to be in advance of the time, certain to be laughed at and abused, and certain to approach the right because they are made in the light of eternity rather than in the shadow of the passing day. With all his knowledge of the older literature he was far more up-to-date than many of the other Southern writers. "Corn" tells the tale of the improvident cotton-grower who becomes "A gamester's catpaw and a banker's slave." "The Symphony" is an attack on the factory system.

If business is battle, name it so:  
War-crimes less will shame it so,  
And widows less will blame it so.

"Acknowledgment" (first sonnet) and "Remonstrance" were signs of the religious doubts that were disturbing the period.

**Lanier as a teacher-poet.** As a poet Lanier had three definite kinds of interest all interwoven into much of his work, but each at times taking first place in his mind as he wrote. First of all, and farthest away from the highest type of poetry-writing, was his interest as a student and teacher. All through his life he was a devoted reader of the older English literature, and in the years just before and after his death one of the fruits of this reading came to the public in four volumes for boys. In 1878 came "The Boys' Froissart," a simple English version of the famous travels of this fourteenth-century Frenchman. In 1880 this was followed by "The Boys' King Arthur," a similar treatment of the Arthurian material, chiefly as found in Malory and as already used by Tennyson in "The Idylls of the King." In 1881, the year of his death, came "The Boys' Mabinogion," the Welsh contribution to Arthurian legend; and

in 1882, "The Boys' Percy" based on Bishop Percy's eighteenth-century collection of old heroic ballads. Lanier's purpose in preparing these works was to put within the reach of boys and girls a great store of material in which they should naturally be interested, for it comes from the boyhood and girlhood of the race, and he did excellent work in a day when good reading for children was sadly neglected (see page 373).

Another expression of this student attitude toward literature is found in his poems drawn from literary sources rather than from his own experience or his own time. "Night and Day," for example, a little sixteen-line song, is a direct reflection from Shakespeare's "Othello." "Clover," inscribed to the memory of John Keats, is a poem on the poet, full of allusions to great poets and musicians. "The Revenge of Hamish" is a successful modern attempt to revive the spirit of the old ballad. "How Love Looked for Hell" could not have been written without the influence of Dante.

**Lanier as a musician-poet.** Sometimes Lanier's chief interest in poetry seems to have been that of the musician, the lover of rhythm and melody. In 1880, right in the midst of the succession of boys' books just referred to, he published his "Science of English Verse," and in a number of his poems he seems to have been occupied chiefly with experiments in verse-making. The outstanding illustration of this interest is the "Song of the Chattahoochee." The obvious point of this poem is that though the flow of the brook from the upper hills is full of life and variety, the duty of the brook is to water the dry plains below. There is nothing either deep or subtle or inspiring in this, but the poem is a very nice illustration of how deftly a skillful poet can adjust sound to sense. It is worth studying in detail for its choice of rhythm, its rime schemes, its alliterations,<sup>1</sup> and its choice of sounds which make different lines describing different aspects of the brook actually suggest the

<sup>1</sup>Alliteration is the use of a succession of words with the same initial sound. For instance, "The *l*aving *l*aurel turned my *t*ide."

smoothness or roughness or rapidity of its flow. The "Song of the Chattahoochee" belongs in the same artificial class with Poe's "Bells," though it is a better poem of its kind.

In this connection it ought to be stated that Lanier quite often became so fascinated by his own methods and devices that the reader is distracted from what the poet was writing about, to the way he was writing. Thus, there is a reaching for effect in the rhythmical quality of many well-known passages. The twelve-line description of the velvet flute-note in "The Symphony," for example, is more deft and intricate than convincing. The figures stumble over each other, and the alliterations and three- and five-fold rimes crowd on each other's heels. In like manner the opening lines of the "Marshes of Glynn" illustrate the overluxuriance of Lanier. Here he affects the reader as a violinist does his audience in a brilliant and showy passage. They sit back in wonder at the performance, but hardly think of it as music at all:

Glooms of the live-oaks, beautiful-braided and woven  
With intricate shades of the vines that myriad-cloven  
Clamber the forks of the multiform boughs,—  
Emerald twilights,—  
Virginal shy lights,  
Wrought of the leaves to allure to the whisper of vows.

In this passage the heaping up of alliteration, double rimes, sound-sense effects, and conscious rhythms is almost bewildering, but as the "Marshes of Glynn" has a real point in contrast to the "Song of the Chattahoochee," the result is unfortunate, because one falls into admiring the musician instead of listening to his music. In his letters he rioted with less restraint than in his verse and in one written to his wife in 1874 he confessed parenthetically: "In plain terms—sweet Heaven, how I do abhor these same plain terms—I have been playing 'Stradella.'" When he wrote this, Lanier was thirty-two. Before his death he had approached the point of liking the plain term better and using it oftener.

**Lanier as a poet of religion.** "The Marshes of Glynn" most completely represents Lanier; but in its social sympathies and in its religion it is the utterance also of Lanier's whole generation. It was written in 1878, the year of Bryant's death; and in its train of ideas it indicates the changes that had taken place in religious thought since Bryant's youth. In "Thanatopsis" the "various language" that Nature speaks is expounded in general terms, before "thoughts of the last bitter hour" lead to the meditation on death and the resolve so to live that death shall have no fears. Lanier's poem is more definite in its descriptions of nature. The poet lingers first in the depths of the woods during the heat of a June day. In the cool and quiet his

heart is at ease from men, and the wearisome sound of the  
stroke

Of the scythe of time and the trowel of trade is low,  
And belief overmasters doubt.

So, toward sunset, he leaves the protected green colonnades and goes out unafraid to face the expanse of "a world of marsh that borders a world of sea." Here Nature, who has consoled him in the forest, fills him with a great gladness.

Oh, what is abroad in the marsh and the terminal sea?

Somehow my soul seems suddenly free  
From the weighing of fate and the sad discussion of sin,  
By the length and the breadth and the sweep of the marshes of  
Glynn.

From the marshes he learns a lesson of life rather than of death—the uplifting power of faith and aspiration. "Thanatopsis" ends with a nobly stated but restraining word of advice and caution; "The Marshes," with a song of liberty:

I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies  
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh and the skies:  
By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod  
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God.

This is written in the positive mood—and in the measure too—of Browning's "Saul." Both poems record the throwing off of paralyzing restraint and the substitution of hope for dread that resulted from the religious struggles of the nineteenth century.

**Conclusion.** Lanier went far toward representing the South by the best of all methods, which is to write as a citizen of the world and not as a sectionalist. He did not reach the height of his maturity, and at times he showed defects that he would in all likelihood have outgrown in the fullness of years. He was an aggressive thinker. Only the indifference of his generation to poetry can account for the fact that he was not persecuted for the courage of many utterances. And he was essentially the poet in artistry as well as in vision.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What intellectual activities in the South between the Revolution and the Civil War helped toward the development of a literary reading-public?

2. To what groups in New York and Boston did the literary circle in Charleston correspond? Which did they resemble more, and in what ways?

3. In what respect did Lanier not represent the South as the older poets Timrod and Hayne did?

4. Read Whitman's "Drum Taps" and compare with the passage from Lanier's "Tiger Lilies" quoted on page 354. Can you remember whether they are true to war conditions as you recall them?

5. What were signs in the arts of the recovery of the South soon after the Civil War? How did some Northern editors give encouragement?

6. Does Lanier's idea of the poet and his powers correspond in any degree to Whitman's?

7. In what respects was Lanier a teacher-poet?

8. In what respects did Lanier combine music and poetry?

9. In what respect does Lanier's religion as revealed in his poetry differ from that of the Puritans?

10. For answers to these questions refer to the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapter XXV:



*a.* What decade was Lanier's most productive? What is its relation to Whitman's most productive decade? to Holmes's? to Thoreau's? to Emerson's?

*b.* What American magazine was established at the beginning of it that exists under another name today?

*c.* What two adjacent European provinces were ceded by one government to another early in this decade which as a result of the World War reverted to the original owner?

*d.* What historical event between 1870 and 1880 would you say had the greatest influence on world history?

*e.* Name one work published between 1870 and 1880 written by a Bostonian, another by a Concord man of letters, another by a Cambridge man, another by a New York man, and one by a Southern poet.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE WEST AND MARK TWAIN (1835-1910)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

MARK TWAIN. *Novels*: One of the following four in this order of preference—Tom Sawyer (see reprint, in Harper's Modern Classics Series, ed. P. H. Boynton), The Prince and the Pauper, Huckleberry Finn, A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur. *Books of Travel*: An idea of the tone and the purpose of them all can be gained from "Innocents Abroad"—chaps. x, xxiii, xxvii, lxi and the Preface and Conclusion.

It is hardly necessary to say to a school or college student that the reading of Mark Twain should be done at a reasonable speed, for the pleasure to be found in his pages, but it may be important to remind the student that even a humorist may be read with the eye of a critic. It will help toward an understanding, as well as an enjoyment, of Mark Twain, if the reader will think of the following points in advance, and have them in the back of his mind as he reads:

Is there a clear plot in "Tom Sawyer" or "Huckleberry Finn"? What element in the story does the author regard as more important than plot? (If a suggestion is needed, see the questions in connection with the reading of Cooper and Hawthorne.)

Is there a clear plot in "The Prince and the Pauper" or "A Connecticut Yankee"? In writing each of these books what general purpose had the author other than that of telling a good story well?

Some of Mark Twain's amusing passages are written "just for the fun of it," and some of them to point a moral. Find one or two illustrations of either kind.

Find passages in the boys' stories that are not necessary to developing either plot or character. Are these addressed to youthful readers or grown-ups?

Would the reading of "Innocents Abroad" lead you to look at Europe with your own eyes? Is there a good reason ever for looking with "the eyes of those who traveled in those countries before"?

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

Colonial beginnings and Western beginnings similar

The life of Mark Twain

His parentage and boyhood

The widening circle of his travels

Success and marriage

The varied fortunes of his later life

Mark Twain a humorist

His consciousness of his methods

The sources of his humor

His underlying wisdom

"Tom Sawyer": addressed to both children and grown-ups

Mark Twain's contempt for old-fashioned children's books

"Tom Sawyer" honest and natural

The double appeal of "Tom Sawyer"

The serious side of Mark Twain

His religious beliefs

His impatience with the behavior of Christian people

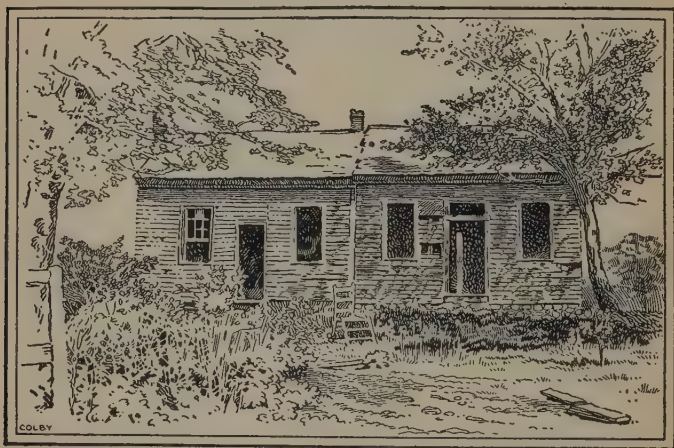
His own simple ideals

The limits to his courage

The later estimate of Mark Twain

**Colonial beginnings and Western beginnings similar.** There is a real parallel between the beginnings of American literature and the early stages of its development in the West, for in both cases it followed on the wave of pioneer settlement. The earliest writers came from the East and were only temporary residents in the new country, Bret Harte and Mark Twain corresponding in different degrees to colonists like John Smith and Nathaniel Ward. A more permanent connection developed in a second group who lived out their lives in the land of their adoption; such, for example, as Joaquin Miller and Increase Mather. And the final stage is fulfilled by those whose whole lives belonged to the maturing frontiers. The parallel exists too in the fact that the pioneer authors wrote usually with one eye on the East (either England or New England), eager for approval and half resentful of criticism—an attitude of West

toward East which still survives among the less independent people along the chain from London to New York, to Chicago, to San Francisco, to Honolulu. The surface contrasts between the motives for settlement, the character of the settlers, and the nature of their writings only emphasize the underlying likenesses. Manners change, but human nature changes so much more slowly that it seems to be almost a constant.



MARK TWAIN'S HOME, FLORIDA, MISSOURI

The life of Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens, 1835-1910). The life of Mark Twain probably touches American life at more points than that of any other author. The first half has been definitely written into his own books, and the whole has been told with his help in Paine's "Life"—one of the best of American biographies. The story begins with his Virginia parentage and the pioneer experiences of his father and mother in the Tennessee mountains; his own residence in the Mississippi Valley and on both seacoasts; his activities as printer, river-pilot, journalist, lecturer, and publisher; his friendships with all sorts and conditions of men, from California miners to the crowned heads of Europe; the joys and

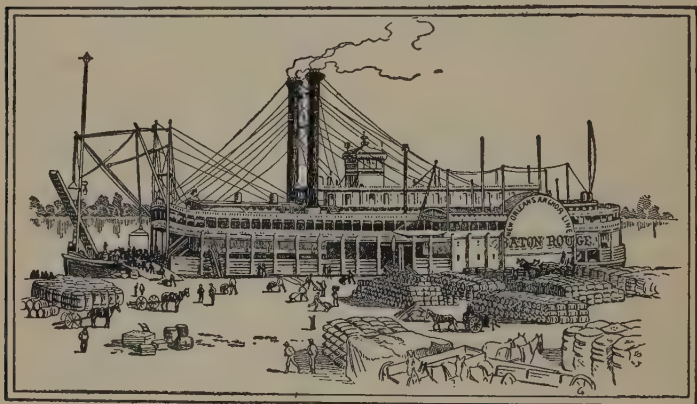
sorrows of a beautiful family life; the making and losing of several fortunes; and an old age crowded with honors and popularity, yet overshadowed by a tragic cloud of doubts and griefs.

**His parentage and boyhood.** His parents, who had been dissatisfied with their attempted settlement in a Tennessee mountain town, left it in 1835 with four children for Florida, Missouri, attracted to the move by the reports of a relative who had gone West ahead of them. The conditions they left are vividly described in the first eleven chapters of "The Gilded Age." In a little town of twenty-one dwellings the boy was born in the autumn of 1835. When he was four years old, the family moved to Hannibal, a river town. Sam Clemens was an irresponsible, dreamy, rather fragile child, a problem to parents and teachers and given to associating with the boys presented in "Tom Sawyer," the most notable of whom was Tom Blankenship, the original of "Huckleberry Finn." His father, never very successful, was made justice of the peace and finally was elected clerk of the circuit court, only to die in 1847 from exposure in the campaign. For the next ten years young Clemens was engaged in the printing business, first under his brother Orion on a Hannibal journal (see "My First Literary Venture," in "Sketches, New and Old," pp. 110-114), then during fifteen months in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, and next in Keokuk, Iowa, and Cincinnati, Ohio.

**The widening circle of his travels.** Finally, in April, 1857, he began to "learn the river" from Horace Bixby, pilot of the *Paul Jones*. His career as pilot (the basis for "Life on the Mississippi") was ended by the closing of river traffic in the spring of 1861, but it gave him with many other bequests his pen name, "mark twain" being one of the calls used in sounding the depth of the ever-shifting channel. Piloting during war times did not appeal to him. "I am not very anxious to get up into a glass perch and be shot at by either side. I'll go home and reflect on the matter." And after reflection he chose the better part of valor and stayed on land. In the next three



months there followed his amusing adventures recorded in "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed" (see "The American Claimant," pp. 343-365); and in July, 1861, he went with his brother Orion to serve with J. W. Nye, territorial governor of Nevada. The life of the next months went into "Roughing it," first at Carson City, then at Humboldt, until, in August, 1862, he began his newspaper work in California on



A MISSISSIPPI RIVER STEAMBOAT

the *Virginia City Enterprise*. At twenty-five he had secured his first view of the country from coast to coast and all down the central artery, he had been schooled in the discipline of the printer's trade (see page 55) and in the far greater responsibilities of river-piloting, and he had begun to write for a living. Two more steps remained in the widening of his travels, and these followed after five years of shifting fortunes on California newspapers. The first was his trip to Honolulu as correspondent for the *Sacramento Union* on the first steamer to make this voyage, and the second, in 1867, was his trip to the Holy Land for the tour which was to be recorded in "Innocents Abroad," first as a series of newspaper letters and then in book form.

**Success and marriage.** With the publication of the "Innocents" in the summer of 1869 Mark Twain came to the half-way point. Out of his wide experience he had developed the habits of an observer and he had learned how to write. He had earned a reputation as a newspaper man, and he had published his most famous short story, "The Jumping Frog," using his talent in spinning a yarn after his own fashion (see his essay "How to Tell a Story," in "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg," pp. 225-230). His lecturing had met with unqualified success; the new book was selling beyond all expectation—67,000 copies in the first year; and he was happily married to Olivia Langdon, his balance wheel, his severest critic, and the friend of all his closest friends.

**The varied fortunes of his later life.** The story of the rest of his life is a record of varied fortunes. His home from 1871 to 1891 was in Hartford, Connecticut, where he was a neighbor of Charles Dudley Warner and an intimate of the Reverend Joseph Twichell (the original of Harris in "A Tramp Abroad"), and where William Dean Howells, his friend of over forty years, often visited him. There was a kind of lavishness in everything he did. He built a mansion, made money with ease, spent it profusely, and invested it with the care-free optimism of Colonel Sellers himself. New inventions fascinated him and made him an easy victim for the fluent promoter, so that what was left from his ventures with the *Buffalo Express* and the Webster Publishing Company went into other enterprises, of which the Paige typesetting machine was the most disastrous, costing him nearly a quarter of a million. After his failure for a large amount, a later friend, Henry H. Rogers, took his affairs in hand and by good management enabled Mark Twain to meet all debts and enjoy a very handsome income during his later years.

The ups and downs of business distracted him but did not baffle him. He traveled extensively, living abroad during most of the decade between 1891 and 1901. He made cordial friends wherever he went, but he was not weaned by them away from

the old cronies of the Mississippi Valley and the Pacific coast. He accepted honors from Yale twice and from the University of Missouri, and in 1907 was the subject of a four-weeks ovation from all England when he went over to receive the degree of Doctor of Letters from Oxford. His opinion was sought on public questions and he was beset for speeches on every sort of occasion; but his last years were shadowed by a succession of bereavements. In 1904 Mrs. Clemens died. His son had died in childhood, one daughter had died in early maturity, another under tragic circumstances in 1909, and the surviving daughter was married and far away most of the time. His chief personal comfort was found in his friendships with several schoolgirls.

During those years after my wife's death I was washing about on a forlorn sea of banquets and speech-making in high and holy causes, and these things furnished me intellectual cheer and entertainment; but they got at my heart for an evening only, then left it dry and dusty. I had reached the grandfather stage of life without grandchildren, so I began to adopt some.

He died in 1910.

**Mark Twain a humorist.** Mark Twain's reputation was built on his humor. He came to full strength in a fruitful decade just after the Civil War, when a crop of newspaper men were coming out with a recklessly fresh, informal jocularity which was related to the old American humor, but a great departure from it. They did not regard themselves as literary men at all. They never could have written books which would have won the attention of Irving's readers and the perusers of the old annuals which at their worst Mark Twain made fun of in "Tom Sawyer." They wrote for the newspaper world, with no respect for beauty of style or literary tradition; and they drew their material from the common people, as Lincoln had done with all his anecdotes, putting it in the language of the common people and frequently distorting it into illiterate spelling. This disturbed and shocked the lovers of a refined literature—

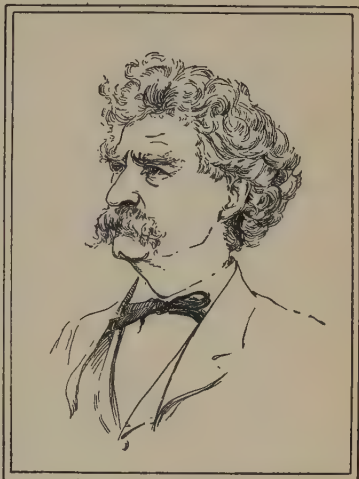
men like Stedman, for example, who wrote to Bayard Taylor, "The whole country, owing to *contagion* of our American newspaper 'exchange' system, is flooded, deluged, swamped, beneath a muddy tide of slang, vulgarity, . . . impertinence, and buffoonery that is not wit." But it was a tide that threw up on its waves something more than foam or driftwood, in the shape of a few real treasures from the deep—and the rarest was Mark Twain.

His consciousness of his methods. If there had been no such journalistic tide this original genius would still have gone on his original way. These other men did more to prepare the public for Mark Twain than to train Mark Twain for the public. He started as the others did, an undercurrent of seriousness appearing now and then in the flow of his fun-making.

He had learned from his own audiences what were the most effective methods of oral delivery in telling a story.

All Tully's rules and all Quintilian's too,  
He by the light of listening faces knew.  
And his rapt audience, all unconscious, lent  
Their own roused force to make him eloquent.

He was quite deliberate in using them. His essay on "How to Tell a Story" shows what he knew about structure, and his letter to the young London editorial assistant (see Paine's "Mark Twain," pp. 1091-1093) is only the best of many passages which show his great care in the choice of words. He did not take liberties with spelling, like many of the other



MARK TWAIN

humorists; he had, to paraphrase his own words, "a singularly fine and aristocratic respect for homely and unpretending English"; and he treated punctuation as a "delicate art" for which he had the highest respect. People who carelessly think of Mark Twain as a kind of literary lawbreaker can correct themselves by an attentive reading of any few pages.

**The sources of his humor.** His humor relied on his never-failing and often extravagant use of the unexpected and the surprising. (1) Often this came out in his similes and metaphors. "A jay hasn't got any more principles than a Congressman." "His lectures on Mont Blanc . . . made people as anxious to see it as if it owed them money." (2) It came out in his impertinent personalities, as in the instance of his first meeting with Grant, when he said after a moment of awkwardness: "General, I seem to be a little embarrassed. Are you?" He was sometimes like Lowell's "backwoods Charlemagne of empires new,"

Who, meeting Cæsar's self, would slap his back,  
Call him "Old Horse," and challenge to a drink.

(3) His humor appeared often in his sober misuse of historical facts with which he and his readers or auditors were well acquainted. (4) And it was developed most elaborately in "hoax" passages where, in his violation of both fact and reason, the canny author looked like the innocent flower but was the serpent under it.

**His underlying wisdom.** There is particular charm in his work because it seems so apparently casual and spontaneous. What he wrote seemed to be for his own pleasure, and what he spoke, no matter how carefully prepared, to be the casual improvising of the moment. Beyond question he literally "enjoyed himself" when he was giving hilarious enjoyment to others; the free play of his fancy was a kind of self-indulgence. Even in his most serious book, "Joan of Arc," he stops to rollic from time to time in very human but totally unhistorical passages. Yet under all his frolicsome gayeties and beneath the



surface ironies in all his books there is, as in the pages of every genuine humorist, a solid sense of the realities of human life. What he set down in the preface to the "Innocents Abroad" he might have said, with a slight change, of his work as a whole: "Notwithstanding it is only the record of a picnic, it has a purpose—which is, to suggest to the reader how *he* would be likely to see Europe and the East if he looked at them with his own eyes instead of the eyes of those who traveled in those countries before him." So he wrote out of the fullness of his heart as well as out of the abundance of his humor. There was in him a natural acumen which, for want of a better name, we may call wisdom. His instinctive perceptions were usually right.

**"Tom Sawyer": addressed to both children and grown-ups.** In the preface to "Tom Sawyer" Mark Twain says,

Although my book is intended mainly for the entertainment of boys and girls, I hope it will not be shunned by men and women on that account, for part of my plan has been to try to pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves, and of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in.

If he wanted to retell to grown-ups the strange undertakings of their childish pasts, he wanted no less to remind the younger generation of what queer books they were sometimes contented with.

**Mark Twain's contempt for old-fashioned children's books.** There were apparently three kinds of story for the boy of the mid-century. One was the heroic tale of knight, yeoman, and outlaw, told in high-flown language, but stimulating to the boyish imagination and therefore tolerated by Mark Twain. The second was the later romance of the Scott type—a type for which Mark Twain had little respect. And the third was the Sunday-school book, the sort of thing suggested by "The Wide, Wide World," "Faith Gartney's Girlhood," "Sandford and Merton," and the "Elsie" and "Rollo" books. He had turned them all to scorn, in various passages scattered through

his writings (in "Life on the Mississippi" and "Huckleberry Finn," in "The Connecticut Yankee," and so on), as well as in such single sketches as the story of the bad little Jim, although "there never was a bad James in the Sunday-school books that had such a streak of luck as this sinful Jim with the charmed life," and the story of the good little Jacob Blivens, "who did the best he could, but didn't come out according to the books."

**"Tom Sawyer" honest and natural.** So in writing of his own boyhood, under the name of Tom Sawyer, he was bound to develop the sort of story that seemed to him honest and wholesome in practical protest against the adulterations of the ordinary food for babes. It must be about a boy who is essentially sound, although not too good to be true. It must tell of his escapades, because for story material these are more interesting than the routine of good behavior. In its effect on the youthful reader it must be neither moralizing nor demoralizing. In this respect it differs from "Peck's Bad Boy," which had little to relieve its mischief. At the same time it differs from Aldrich's "Story of a Bad Boy" in being very much more of a story and less of a history.

**The double appeal of "Tom Sawyer."** The appeal has been a double one: to the boy because the story is ingenious, stirring, and just thrilling enough to have the glamour of romance without being incredible; to the average business man because it reminds him of his forgotten self and helps him to an understanding of his sons. Many a story-writer has followed Mark Twain into Tom Sawyer territory—one, Mr. Tarkington, with preëminent success. And even he apparently owes a debt of the clearest sort, for the first occurrence of the name he has made famous is Brer Penrod in "Huckleberry Finn."

**The serious side of Mark Twain.** Mark Twain was an increasingly serious man. Before he was fifty years old one of his daughters had written in her journal, "He is known to the public as a humorist, but he has much more in him that is earnest than that is humorous." And again: "Whenever we are all alone at home nine times out of ten he talks about

some very earnest subject (with an occasional joke thrown in), and he a good deal more often talks upon such subjects than upon the other kind. He is as much a philosopher as anything, I think." There were many reasons for his turn of mind. His passage through life from obscure poverty to wealth and fame heightened his respect for the few blessings that are really worth while. His repeated travels, culminating with his trip around the world, the honors that came to him, the social dis-



STORMFIELD—HOME OF MARK TWAIN

tinctions that were showered on him, his friendships with thinking men, the deaths of his wife and children, all led him to consider the ways of the world and of the Maker thereof. In a further comment his wise little daughter went near to the heart of the matter when she wrote quaintly, "I think he could have done a great deal in this direction if he had studied while young, for he seems to enjoy reasoning out things, no matter what; in a great many such directions he has greater ability than in the gifts which have made him famous." "If he had studied while young," Mark Twain might have gained a knowledge that would have steadied him in his own thinking. Yet possibly it would have made little difference, for his thinking was at the same time all his own and altogether in the drift of nineteenth-century thought.

**His religious beliefs.** Mark Twain had the same distrust of what the average person thought about religion as he did of what the average tourist said about the cathedrals and the paintings of Europe, and he was eager to come to his own conclusions. He was puzzled by the fact that the God who appeared in the Old Testament was "an irascible, vindictive, fierce and ever fickle and changeful master." He could not believe in such a deity, and so his reasoning powers shook his faith in the inspiration of the Bible and shook his confidence in the creeds founded on the Bible; but when he lost the God of the Hebrews he found his own "in the presence of the benignant serenity of the Alps, . . . a spirit which had looked down, through the slow drift of ages, upon a million vanished races of men, and judged them; and would judge a million more—and still be there, watching unchanged and unchangeable, after all life should be gone and the earth have become a vacant desolation."

It is quite clear that he was as deeply religious a man as his intimate friend the Reverend Dr. Joseph Twichell, and over and over again it appears in his writing that he would have been glad to believe all that Dr. Twichell or the most orthodox churchman believed. There is a deep pathos in the many passages, of which the following is a fair example :

To read that [a story of miracles performed by a saint] in a book written by a monk far back in the Middle Ages would surprise no one; it would sound natural and proper; but when it is seriously stated in the middle of the nineteenth century, by a man of finished education, an LL.D., M.A., and an archæological mag-nate, it sounds strangely enough. *Still I would gladly change my unbelief for Neligan's faith, and let him make the conditions as hard as he pleased.*

Yet in spite of all his wishes he never could quite rise to the faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"; so that the clearest statement of his belief was, after all, a pathetic profession of doubt :

I believe in God the Almighty . . . I think the goodness, the justice and the mercy of God are manifested in his works; I perceive they are manifested toward me in this life; the logical conclusion is that they will be manifested toward me in the life to come, *if there should be one*.

**His impatience with the behavior of Christian people.** He could not help judging the religion of his countrymen by the behavior of his countrymen, and he was filled with anger at the narrowness of an Episcopal rector, who refused to perform the burial service for the actor George Holland, and at the greed of the missionary societies who demanded excessive payments from the Chinese for damages done to missionary property in the Boxer Rebellion. On the national ideals of the Christian nations he wrote in bitter prophecy in 1908:

The gospel of peace is always making a deal of noise, always rejoicing in its progress but always neglecting to furnish statistics. There are no peaceful nations now. All christendom is a soldier camp. The poor have been taxed in some nations to the starvation point to support the giant armaments which Christian governments have built up, each to protect itself from the rest of the Christian brotherhood, and incidentally to snatch any scrap of real estate left exposed by a weaker owner. King Leopold II of Belgium, the most intensely Christian monarch, except Alexander VI, that has escaped hell thus far, has stolen an entire kingdom in Africa, and in fourteen years of Christian endeavor there has reduced the population from thirty millions to fifteen by murder and mutilation and overwork, confiscating the labor of the helpless natives, and giving them nothing in return but salvation and a home in heaven, furnished at the last moment by the Christian priest. Within the last generation each Christian power has turned the bulk of its attention to finding out newer and still newer and more and more effective ways of killing Christians, and, incidentally, a pagan now and then; and the surest way to get rich quickly in Christ's earthly kingdom is to invent a kind of gun that can kill more Christians at one shot than any other existing kind. All the Christian nations are at it. The more advanced they are, the bigger and more destructive engines of war they create.



**His own simple ideals.** As for his own beliefs and his own conduct throughout his books and his life, he upheld the simple virtues: common honesty; loyalty to the family; kindness to brutes, to the weak or suffering, and to the primitive peoples. His ridicule was always directed at different forms of selfishness and insincerity, and he answered his own question "What is Happiness?" with the precept "Diligently train your ideals upward and still upward, toward a summit where you will find your chiefest pleasure in conduct which, while contenting you, will be sure to confer benefits upon your neighbor and the community."

**The limits to his courage.** In the latest book on Mark Twain, "The Ordeal of Mark Twain," by Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, the author fairly makes the charge that, outspoken as Mark Twain was, he still failed to say frankly all that was in his heart both about mankind and about his fellow countrymen. These few sentences out of the many quoted from the humorist by the critic will illustrate the point: "Perhaps there is something that [man] loves more than he loves peace—the approval of his neighbors and the public. And perhaps there is something which he dreads more than he dreads pain—the disapproval of his neighbors and the public." "Frankness is a jewel; only the young can afford it." The last is from the "War Prayer," a bitter attack on praying to a universal God for victory for a particular nation. When he was urged to publish this, he replied: "No, I have told the whole truth in that, and only dead men can tell the truth in this world. It can be published after I am dead." This was without doubt one reason why Mark Twain left behind him many volumes-full of manuscript. Several of these have already been published, and it is generally understood that there are more still to follow, some of them perhaps not for a long while yet; but they seem to prove that, daring though Mark Twain was, he felt that the price of complete frankness was greater than he wanted to pay.

**The later estimate of Mark Twain.** Not until the last years of his life did readers begin to take Mark Twain seriously;

now they are coming to appreciate him. He has been fortunate in his literary champions,—biographers, critics, and expositors,—and incomparably so in the loving interpretation, "My Mark Twain," by his intimate friend William Dean Howells. He concludes:

Out of a nature rich and fertile beyond any that I have ever known, the material given him by the Mystery that makes a man and then leaves him to make himself over, he wrought a character of high nobility upon a foundation of clear and solid truth. . . . It is in vain that I try to give a notion of the intensity with which he pierced to the heart of life, and the breadth of vision with which he compassed the whole world, and tried for the reason of things, and then left trying. . . . Next I saw him dead. . . . I looked a moment at the face I knew so well; and it was patient with the patience I had so often seen in it; something of puzzle, a great silent dignity, an assent to what must be from the depths of a nature whose tragical seriousness broke in the laughter which the unwise took for the whole of him. Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes—I knew them all—and all the rest of our sages, poets, seers, critics, humorists; they were like one another and like other literary men; but Clemens was sole, incomparable, the Lincoln of our literature.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What are some parallels between early settlement and early authorship along the Atlantic coast in the seventeenth century and along the Pacific coast in the nineteenth century?

2. What different kinds of experience did Mark Twain have during his first thirty years, and how did each kind help him to know American life as a whole?

3. Who were some of his most notable friends in his later life?

4. What university honors were conferred on him? Which of these was the most remarkable, and why?

5. What group of humorists helped prepare the public for Mark Twain? Are there any men of a similar type writing today? What has the progress of printing done toward developing a new type of newspaper humorist?

16. What essay did Mark Twain write that showed that he had a theory about humor and how to make it effective? What device did he reject that was common in his day? What were four sources on which he frequently relied for humorous effects?

7. What was his purpose in writing "Innocents Abroad"?

8. What kinds of children's books did Mark Twain try to replace by his two best-known boys' stories, and what did he try to do in them?

9. Who were the two sets of readers to whom "Tom Sawyer" was addressed, and what was the appeal to each?

10. What is the general point of Susie Clemens's comments on her father? Is a boy or girl of twelve to fifteen a good judge of her parents' qualities? Why, or why not?

11. Was Mark Twain's chief objection to the theory of Christianity or to the behavior of Christian individuals and Christian nations? Were his grounds good?

12. Did Mark Twain write any things which suggest that there were limits to his courage?

13. In answering the following questions, the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapter XXV will be found helpful:

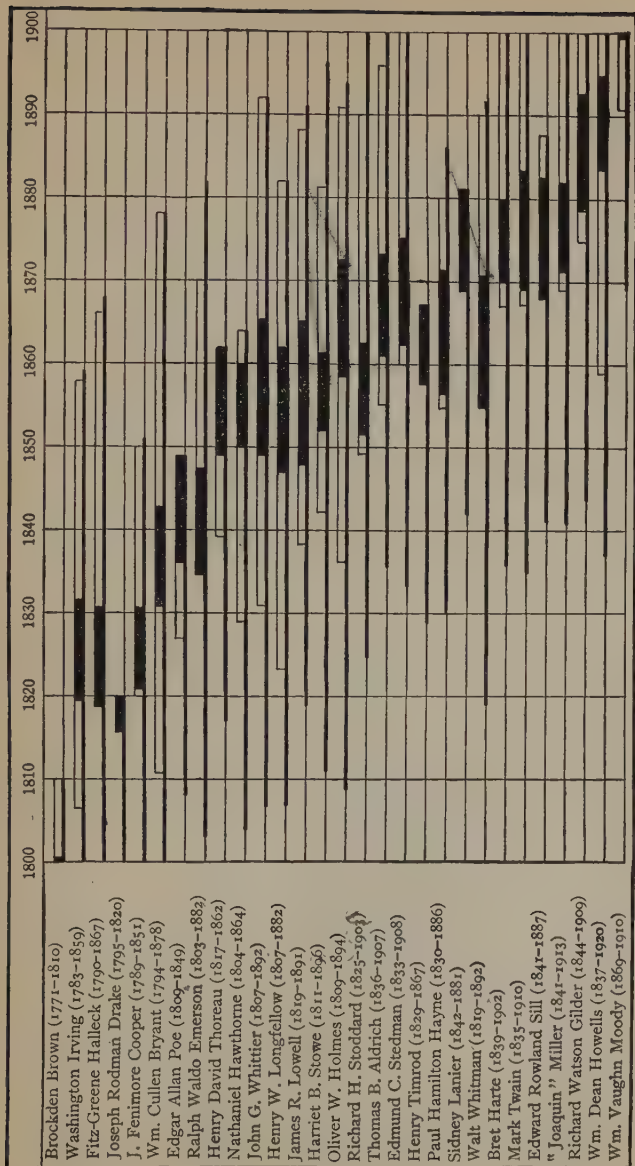
a. Compare Mark Twain's most fruitful period of authorship, according to Chronological Chart No. II, p. 381, with Lanier's; with Whitman's. Did his life inclose Lanier's?

b. What three important works by Mark Twain were published between 1880 and 1890? What three writers of Southern stories appear in this period? What other new writers appear in these years, and are you familiar with any of their works?

c. Are there any British writers familiar to you whose names appear for the first time between 1880 and 1890?

d. What great autocrat in Europe came into power toward the end of this ten years?

e. What gift in this period immortalized France in one of our great harbors?



CHRONOLOGICAL CHART NO. II. AMERICAN LITERATURE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

— Length of life, as far as included in this century

— Period of authorship

— Most important period of authorship

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE WEST IN JOAQUIN MILLER (1841-1913)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

JOAQUIN MILLER. *The Last Taschastas*, *Kit Carson's Ride*, *Crossing the Plains*, *Westward Ho!* *The Sioux Chief's Daughter*, *At our Golden Gate*, *Columbus*, *Adios*.

Also passages as found in such collections as the following:

BOYNTON, P. H. *American Poetry*, pp. 555-567. Charles Scribner's Sons.

BOYNTON, P. H. *Milestones in American Literature*, pp. 550-570. Ginn and Company.

CALHOUN, M. E., and MACALARNEY, E. L. *Readings in American Literature*, pp. 618-621. Ginn and Company.

STEDMAN, E. C. *An American Anthology*, pp. 426-430. Houghton Mifflin Company.

What is the relation of Miller's story "The Last Taschastas" to the last section of Longfellow's "Hiawatha" ("The Departure of Hiawatha") and to Cooper's "Last of the Mohicans" (see pages 273 and 131)?

Compare "Kit Carson's Ride" with Browning's "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix." How do they resemble each other (1) in form, and (2) in story outline? Is one a better story than the other?

What two contrasting comments does Miller make on war in "Westward Ho!" and in "At our Golden Gate"? Do they necessarily contradict each other?

Tell the story of "The Sioux Chief's Daughter" in four or five sentences. What is the surprise at the end? What is the relation of the gray hawks to the story? Can you see the relationship of this story to the conventional fairy tale or love story in the elements from which it is made and the way it turns out?

Compare Miller's "Columbus" with Lanier's "Sonnets on Columbus." Are the stories and the central ideas different? Which appeals to you the more?



## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Miller's long residence in the West
- The early life of Joaquin Miller
  - Emigration to the West
  - Boyhood and young manhood
  - First authorship, and repulse at home
  - English recognition
- The middle period of authorship
  - Use of primitive frontier material
  - Use of conventional rhythms
- The closing period
  - Sweeping revision of earlier work
  - Increasing simplicity of form
  - Life and teachings on "The Hights"
- Comparison with Mark Twain and Walt Whitman

**Miller's long residence in the West.** In the development of a Western literature Joaquin Miller (1841-1913), like Bret Harte and Mark Twain and like all the other adult Californians in the pioneer period, was imported from the East; but he lived on the Coast longer than the two prose writers. Of the three men Joaquin Miller was the most completely and continuously Western. He went out almost as early as Mark Twain did, lived during boyhood in far more primitive circumstances, and, after varied travels in the East and in Europe, returned to the West for his old age, dying on "The Hights," as his place was called, in sight of the Golden Gate.



THE GOLDEN GATE

The early life of Joaquin Miller—emigration to the West. Cincinnatus Hiner (Joaquin) Miller was born in 1841. "My cradle was a covered wagon, pointed west. I was born in a covered wagon, I am told, at or about the time it crossed the line dividing Indiana from Ohio." His father was of Scotch immigrant stock—a natural frontiersman, but a man with a love of books. In 1852, moved by the same restlessness that had taken the Clemens family to Missouri seventeen years earlier, the Millers started on the three-thousand-mile round-about journey to Oregon, finding their way without roads over the plains and mountains in a trip lasting more than seven months. It was from this that the boy gained his lasting respect for the first pioneers.

O bearded, stalwart, westmost men  
So tower-like, so Gothic built!  
A kingdom won without the guilt  
Of studied battle, that hath been  
Your blood's inheritance. . . . Your heirs  
Know not your tombs: The great plough-shares  
Cleave softly through the mellow loam  
Where you have made eternal home,  
And set no sign. Your epitaphs  
Are writ in furrows.

**Boyhood and young manhood.** After two years in the new Oregon home the two Miller boys ran away to seek gold. They seem to have separated, and in the following years the coming poet survived a most amazing series of hardships among the Indians. One rough comrade, however, "Mountain Joe," a graduate of Heidelberg, helped him with his Latin even in the midst of these adventures. The boy returned to Oregon early enough to earn a diploma at Columbia University there in 1859. In the next ten years he had many occupations. For a while he was express messenger carrying gold dust, but safe from the Indians, who had become his trusted friends. "Those matchless night-rides under the stars, dashing into the Orient

doors of dawn before me as the sun burst through the shining mountain pass,—this brought my love of song to the surface.” Later he was editor of a pacifist newspaper which was suppressed, as such newspapers are always likely to be, for alleged treason. But the largest proportion of his time was spent at the law. From 1866 until 1870 he held a minor judgeship.



OLD STAGECOACH IN CALIFORNIA

From a very rare lithograph

**First authorship, and repulse at home.** Throughout all this time—he was now nearly thirty—Miller’s chief passion had been for reading and writing poetry. In 1868 a thin booklet, “Specimens,” was issued, and in San Francisco, in 1869, “Joaquin et al.” For naming his book in this fashion, instead of “Joaquin and Other Poems,” his legal friends repaid him with the nickname that finally became the one by which the world knows him. Bret Harte, then an influential editor, gave the book a fair review, but in general it was slightly treated.

Impulsive in mood and with little respect for the hardships of travel, Miller started East, and three months later, as he records, was kneeling at the grave of Burns in Scotland, with a definite resolve never to come back to America. In the volume of poems of his own selection he wrote of the resentment expressed in "Vale! [Farewell] America," "I do not like this bit of impatience nor do I expect anyone else to like it, and only preserve it here as a sort of landmark or journal in my journey through life." But for the moment in his sensitiveness he doubtless wrote quite truly:

I starve, I die,  
Each day of my life. Ye pass me by  
Each day, and laugh as ye pass; and when  
Ye come, I start in my place as ye come,  
And lean, and would speak,—but my lips are dumb.

**English recognition.** He had, of course, no reputation in London, where he soon settled near the British Museum; and the English public were not greatly interested in poetry then. A descendant and namesake of the John Murray who had refused to deal with the "Sketch Book" (see page 109) gave a like response to Miller's offer of his "Pacific Poems." But Miller had one hundred copies printed at his own expense and sent them broadcast for review, with the result of an immediate and enthusiastic recognition. The "Songs of the Sierras" were soon regularly published in London, and the poet was received in friendliest fashion as a peer of Dean Stanley, Lord Houghton, Robert Browning, and other leading men of letters.

**The middle period of authorship.** The period from 1873 to 1887 is a middle zone in Miller's career. His moves in Europe and America are difficult to follow and have not been clearly unraveled by any biographer. One can get a fairly clear idea of their nature if not of their order by an attentive reading of his poems and particularly of the chatty footnotes with which he accompanied the collections he edited. He continued to use

the frontier experience of the early days. His most characteristic poems were stories of thrilling experience in the open. In "My Own Story," "Life amongst the Modocs," "Unwritten History, Paquita," and "My Life among the Indians" he used the same material in prose. In certain other poems, particularly the "Isles of the Amazons" and "The Baroness of New York," he set in contrast the romance of the forest with the conventions of the big city, and in "The Song of the South" he attempted—not to his own satisfaction—to do for the Mississippi what he had done for the mountains. Shorter lyrics show his interest in world events such as the death of President Garfield and the American war with Spain. In two poems of 1901 he wrote in withering condemnation of England's policy toward the Boers in South Africa.



JOAQUIN MILLER

**Use of primitive frontier material.** All the material of this middle period is filled with his praise of the elemental forces of nature. The sea and the forest at rest suggested to him their sleeping powers. His best scenes deal with storm, flood, and fire, and when occasionally he painted a calm background, as in the departure of "The Last Taschastas," the burnished beauty of the setting is in strong contrast with the violence of the episode. In human experience he most admired primitive strength. It is this which endeared the early pioneers to him. His women were Amazonian in physique and character—a singularly consistent type, almost a recurrence of one woman of various complexions.



**Use of conventional rhythms.** The form of all this mid-period work was quite conventional and, in contrast with the subject-matter, smacked strangely of the library and the drawing-room. He ran as a rule to four-stressed lines, indulged in insistent riming, rarely missing a chance, and cast his stanzas into a jogging and seldom-varied rhythm. In their assault on the ear his verses have little delicacy of appeal. They blare at the reader like the brasses in an orchestral fortissimo. They clamor at him with the strident regularity of a Sousa march. This dominant measure accords well with the rude subject-matter of his poems,—the march of the pioneer, the plod of oxen yoked to the prairie schooner, the roar of prairie fire or of the wind through the forest; and, with a difference, the hoof-beat of galloping horses or of stampeding buffalo. And they are expressed in the lofty rhetoric which is the natural expression of life in a country of magnificent distances. At the same time Miller found models in Scott and Byron and Coleridge, by whom he was often and evidently influenced. Until he was well past mid-career he was boyishly open to direct literary influences.

**The closing period—sweeping revision of earlier work.** In his final revisions, however, he was ruthless in rejecting his imitative passages. This is best illustrated by what he did to the "Baroness of New York" before he had done with it. In its original form of 1877 it filled a whole volume, a poem—not a novel, as often wrongly stated—in two parts. The first part is a sea-island romance of love and desertion after the manner of Scott; the sequel presents Adora in New York as the Baroness du Bois, and is written in the manner of Byron. When Miller included this poem in his collected edition of 1897, he dropped all the Byronic, city portion and reduced the rest to less than half—the fraction that was quite his own.

**Increasing simplicity of form.** Such a revision was in the fullest sense the work of matured judgment. Miller was now in his last long period of picturesque retirement on "The

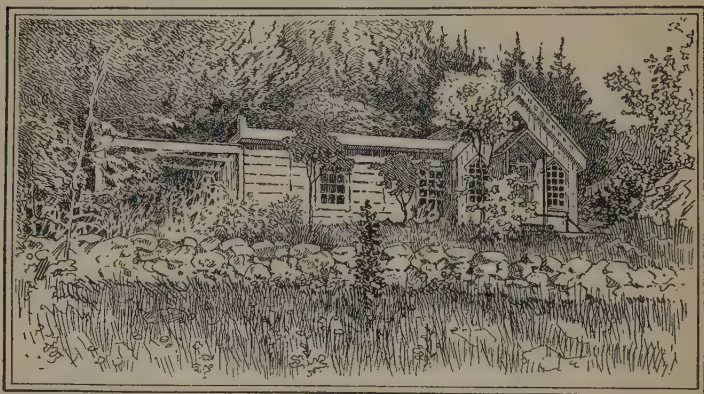
Hights," looking back over his abundant output of former years, recognizing the good in it, and depending upon the public to reject what had no right to a long life. At times he still wrote poem-stories of primitive adventure, but he supplemented these with more and more frequent short lyrics, and he studied continually to arrive at that simplicity which is seldom the result of anything but perfected art. In 1902 he wrote:

Shall we ever have an American literature? Yes, when we leave sound and words to the winds. American science has swept time and space aside. American science dashes along at fifty, sixty miles an hour; but American literature still lumbers along in the old-fashioned English stage-coach at ten miles an hour; and sometimes with a red-coated outrider blowing a horn. We must leave all this behind us. We have not time for words. A man who uses a great, big, sounding word, when a short one will do, is to that extent a robber of time. A jewel that depends greatly on its setting is not a great jewel. When the Messiah of American literature comes, he will come singing, so far as may be, in words of one syllable.

In the main his hope now was to pass from narrative poetry to "the vision of worlds beyond,"—a vision which he more nearly approached in "Sappho and Phaon," than in any other poem, and a vision for which the motive is stated in the second stanza of "Adios":

Could I but teach man to believe—<sup>a</sup>  
Could I but make small men to grow,  
To break frail spider-webs that weave<sup>u</sup>  
About their thews and bind them low;  
Could I but sing one song and slay<sup>a</sup>  
Grim Doubt; I then could go my way  
In tranquil silence, glad, serene,<sup>a</sup>  
And satisfied, from off the scene.  
But ah, this disbelief, this doubt,<sup>a</sup>  
This doubt of God, this doubt of good,—  
The damned spot will not out.<sup>a</sup>

**Life and teachings on "The Hights."** In the meanwhile, Miller was attempting to lead his life sanely and to point the way for the younger generation of poets. In his final note to the 1902 edition he described himself as living on "a sort of hillside Bohemia." No lessons were taught there except, by example, the lesson of living. Four or five "tenets or principles of life" were insisted upon: that man is good; that there



"THE HIGHTS," JOAQUIN MILLER'S HOME IN CALIFORNIA

is nothing ugly in nature; that man is immortal; that nature wastes no thing and no time; and that man should learn the lesson of economy. So in a way he returned to the simple conditions of his earliest life.

**Comparison with Mark Twain and Walt Whitman.** Miller naturally invites comparison with Mark Twain and Walt Whitman. The likeness starts with the simple origins and the rough-and-ready upbringing of all three. It continues with their feeling for the common men and women who make up the mass of humankind. It is maintained in their conscious personal picturesqueness: Whitman gray-bearded, open-collared, wearing his hat indoors or out; Mark Twain in his white serge, regardless of season; and Miller with long hair, velvet jacket, and high boots,—evidence of the humanizing personal

vanity in each which was quite apart from the genuine bigness of their characters. It follows in the "high seriousness" of all three. And it is confirmed in the fact of their early recognition in England and their less respectful reception at home (see pages 335 and 370). Miller, like these others, was in the '70's what the Old World chose to think the typical American ought to be. He was fresher to them than those other Americans whom their countrymen were eagerly describing as the "American Burns," the "American Wordsworth," the "American Scott," and the "American Tennyson"; and to this degree—though he was not a representative of the prevailing American literature—he was actually a representative of the country itself, and especially of the vast stretch from the Mississippi to the Pacific. For Miller and the America he knew best were both full of natural vigor, full of hope and faith, conscious of untold possibilities in the nearer and the remoter future, and, withal, relatively youthful and unformed.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In point of residence in the West how did Miller resemble and how did he differ from other early Western writers?
2. What strongly contrasted sorts of education did Miller receive before he became of age? How were these both of value to him later as a poet?
3. What was the difference between his reception as an author in San Francisco and in London? Can this be reasonably accounted for?
4. From what sources did he draw most of his material? Was his poetic style as unusual as his poetic subject matter? Do they fit well together?
5. Miller's rhythms and stanza forms were altogether different from Whitman's. What did they believe in common about the words best suited to poetry?
6. What similarities are to be found in Mark Twain, Whitman, and Miller?
7. The Chronological Outlines at the close of this chapter, and Chart No. II (p. 381), should be used in answering the following questions:

# SECTION V

DATES	AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS	AMERICAN LITERARY HISTORY
1860-1870	<p>EMERSON: The Conduct of Life, 1860  HAWTHORNE: The Marble Faun, 1860  HOLMES: The Professor at the Breakfast Table, 1860  HENRY TIMROD: Poems, 1860  LOWELL: Biglow Papers, Second Series, 1861-1866  HOLMES: Elsie Venner, 1861  HAWTHORNE: Our Old Home, 1863  LONGFELLOW: Tales of a Wayside Inn, 1863  BAYARD TAYLOR: Hannah Thurston, 1863  THOREAU: Excursions, 1863; The Maine Woods, 1864  BRYANT: Thirty Poems, 1864  LOWELL: Commemoration Ode, 1865  WHITMAN: Drum Taps, 1865  WHITTIER: National Lyrics, 1865; Snow-Bound, 1866  MARK TWAIN: The Celebrated Jumping Frog, 1867  SIDNEY LANIER: Tiger Lilies, 1867  LONGFELLOW: New England Tragedies, 1868  WHITTIER: Among the Hills, 1868  JOAQUIN MILLER: Joaquin et al, 1869  MARK TWAIN: Innocents Abroad, 1869  STOWE: Oldtown Folks, 1869</p>	<p>Edith Wharton born, 1862  Thoreau died, 1862  Lincoln's Gettysburg speech, 1863  Hawthorne died, 1864  Howells, consul at Venice, 1861-1865  Howells, an editor of the <i>Atlantic Monthly</i>, 1866-1881  Timrod died, 1867  Edgar Lee Masters born, 1869  Edwin Arlington Robinson born, 1869  Booth Tarkington born, 1869  William Vaughn Moody born, 1869</p>
1870-1880	<p>EMERSON: Society and Solitude, 1870  BRET HARTE: The Luck of Roaring Camp, 1870  LOWELL: Among My Books, First Series, 1870; My Study Windows, 1871  MILLER: Songs of the Sierras, 1871  MARK TWAIN: Roughing It, 1872  HOLMES: The Poet at the Breakfast Table, 1872  MARK TWAIN: Tom Sawyer, 1876  LANIER: Poems, 1876  LOWELL: Among My Books, Second Series, 1876; Three Memorial Poems, 1877  LANIER: The Marshes of Glynn, 1878  GEORGE W. CABLE: Old Creole Days, 1879</p>	<p>Simms died, 1870  <i>Scribner's Monthly</i> established, 1870; became the <i>Century Magazine</i>, 1881  Winston Churchill born, 1871  Howells, editor in chief of the <i>Atlantic Monthly</i>, 1872-1881  Amy Lowell born, 1874  Robert Frost born, 1875  Lowell, minister to Spain, 1877-1880; minister to England, 1880-1885  Bryant died, 1878  Carl Sandburg born, 1878  Vachel Lindsay born, 1879</p>
1880-1890	<p>CABLE: The Grandissimes, 1880  J. C. HARRIS: Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings, 1880  LEW WALLACE: Ben Hur, 1880  MARK TWAIN: The Prince and the Pauper, 1881  WHITMAN: Specimen Days and Collect, 1882  MARK TWAIN: Huckleberry Finn, 1884  WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS: The Rise of Silas Lapham, 1884  HOLMES: A Mortal Antipathy, 1885  THOMAS NELSON PAGE: In Ole Virginia, 1887  MARGARET DELAND: John Ward, Preacher, 1888  MARK TWAIN: A Connecticut Yankee, 1889  HOWELLS: A Hazard of New Fortunes, 1889</p>	<p>Aldrich, editor of the <i>Atlantic Monthly</i>, 1881-1890  Lanier died, 1881  Emerson died, 1882  Longfellow died, 1882  Ulysses S. Grant died, 1885  Hayne died, 1886  <i>Scribner's Magazine</i> established, 1887</p>



# SECTION V

ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LITERATURE	HISTORICAL EVENTS
<p>George Eliot: <i>The Mill on the Floss</i>, 1860  Charles Reade: <i>The Cloister and the Hearth</i>, 1860  Mrs. Browning died, 1861  George Eliot: <i>Silas Marner</i>, 1861  Hugo: <i>Les Misérables</i>, 1862  Turgenev: <i>Fathers and Sons</i>, 1862  Tennyson: <i>Enoch Arden</i> and <i>Other Poems</i>, 1864  Lewis Carroll: <i>Alice in Wonderland</i>, 1865  Ruskin: <i>Sesame and Lilies</i>, 1865  Hugo: <i>Toilers of the Sea</i>, 1866  Bryce: <i>The Holy Roman Empire</i>, 1866  Dostoevsky: <i>Crime and Punishment</i>, 1866  H. G. Wells born, 1866  Arnold Bennett born, 1867  William Morris: <i>Life and Death of Jason</i>, 1867  Ibsen: <i>Peer Gynt</i>, 1867  Browning: <i>The Ring and the Book</i>, 1868</p>	<p>Population of free states 7,000,000 above that of slave states, 1860  Secession of South Carolina, 1860  Wilhelm I, king of Prussia, 1861-1888  Bismarck made president of Prussian cabinet, 1862  Abraham Lincoln, president, 1861-1865  Confederate states organized, 1861  CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865  Firing upon Fort Sumter, 1861  Emancipation Proclamation, 1863  Lee's surrender to Grant, 1865  Assassination of Lincoln, April 14, 1865  National debt \$2,845,907,626, in 1865  Andrew Johnson, president, 1865-1869  Vassar College opened, 1865  Atlantic cable permanently laid, 1866  Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy established, 1867  Purchase of Alaska (for \$7,000,000), 1867  Gladstone, prime minister of England, 1868-1874  North and South Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida readmitted to the Union, 1868  Ulysses S. Grant, president, 1869-1877  Suez Canal opened, 1869  Kansas, West Virginia, Nevada, and Nebraska admitted to the Union, between 1860 and 1870</p>
<p>Dickens died, 1870  Darwin: <i>Descent of Man</i>, 1871  George Eliot: <i>Middlemarch</i>, 1871-1872  Hardy: <i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i>, 1874  Hugo: <i>Ninety-Three</i>, 1874  William Morris: <i>Sigurd the Volsung</i>, 1876  Tennyson: <i>Harold</i>, 1877  Tolstoi: <i>Anna Karénina</i>, 1877  Hardy: <i>The Return of the Native</i>, 1878  Zola: <i>Nana</i>, 1879  Ibsen: <i>A Doll's House</i>, 1879</p>	<p>Population of United States 38,558,371 in 1870  Franco-Prussian War, 1870-1871  France declared a republic for the third time, 1870  France forced to cede Alsace and Lorraine to Germany in peace of 1871  Unification of Italy complete, 1871  King of Prussia became emperor of Germany, with Bismarck as chancellor, 1871  Abolition of feudalism in Japan, 1871  First railroad in Japan opened, 1872  Secret ballot (Australian) introduced into England, 1872  First railroad in China opened, 1876  Rutherford B. Hayes, president, 1877-1881  Colorado admitted to the Union, 1876</p>
<p>George Eliot died, 1880  Carlyle died, 1881  Darwin died, 1882  Hardy: <i>Two on a Tower</i>, 1882  Stevenson: <i>Treasure Island</i>, 1883  Meredith: <i>Diana of the Crossways</i>, 1885  Victor Hugo died, 1885  Stevenson: <i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i>; <i>Kidnapped</i>, 1886  Mrs. Humphry Ward: <i>Robert Elsmere</i>, 1888  Browning died, 1889</p>	<p>Population of United States 50,155,783 (in cities 11,318,597), 1880  James A. Garfield, president, 1881; died, September 19, 1881  Chester A. Arthur, president, 1881-1885  Immigrants to United States about 789,000 (maximum number in any single year to date), 1882  Grover Cleveland, president, 1885-1889  Statue of Liberty, gift of France, dedicated, 1886  Australian ballot adopted in Massachusetts, 1888  Wilhelm II, emperor of Germany, 1888-1918  Benjamin Harrison, president, 1889-1893  Department of Agriculture given cabinet rank, 1889  Johnstown flood, 1889  North and South Dakota, Washington, and Montana, admitted to the Union, 1889</p>

*a.* Compare the most important periods of authorship of Lanier, Mark Twain, and Joaquin Miller. Compare their birth dates.

*b.* Name at least two other important works that were published in the same year "Joaquin et al" was published.

*c.* In the ten years between 1870 and 1880 can you pick out from among the men who had done their most important work, but were still writing, one author from Boston, one from Concord, one from Cambridge, one from New York, and one from the West? Why is an author from the South not asked for in this question?

*d.* Name three important English works of these same years, two French, one Russian, and one Norwegian.

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## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE RISE OF FICTION; WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS (1837-1920)

No reading list is supplied with this chapter, as no extensive reading for it could be crowded into a school course. It is presented as a survey which is related to much in the preceding chapters and serves as a link between the earlier fiction and the fiction of today.

#### CHAPTER OUTLINE

The changing fashions in American literature

    The earlier novelists

    The novelists after the Civil War

William Dean Howells: his life

    His early writing

    His book-loving friends

    The appointment to Venice

Howell's two types of novels

    The early pictures of American life

    The later criticisms of American life

**The changing fashions in American literature.** Important changes seldom take place in the history of literature without long preparations. From time to time new emphasis is placed on old ideas, and old forms are given the right of way in literary fashion. In the course of American literature, roughly speaking, the leading forms of literature have been, in succession, exposition and travel during the colonial period; poetry, satirical and epic, in the Revolutionary period; poetry in all its broader aspects during the first two thirds of the nineteenth century. After the Civil War for fifty years fiction came to the front; from about 1900 on a new emphasis was given to the stage and the playwright; at present the most striking fact in world literature is the broadening and deepening of the poetic currents again. Yet all of these forms are always existent.

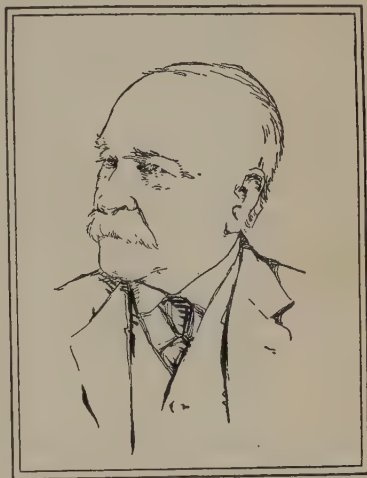
**The earlier novelists.** It is often said that America's chief contribution to world literature has been the short story since the Civil War. Yet the ground had been prepared for this development by many writers,—among them, as already mentioned in this history, Washington Irving with the "Sketch Book" in 1819 (see pages 109-120), Hawthorne with "Twice-Told Tales" in 1837 (see pages 232 and 235), Poe with his various contributions to periodical literature in the '40's (see pages 165-175), Mark Twain with the "Celebrated Jumping Frog" of 1865, Bret Harte with "The Luck of Roaring Camp" of 1868 and the great bulk of his later contributions, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich with "Marjorie Daw" of 1873 and his other volumes of short stories. In the meanwhile the novel had had its unbroken history—from Brockden Brown beginning with 1798 to Cooper in 1820 (see page 128), Hawthorne from 1850 on (see pages 233-243), Mrs. Stowe from 1852 (see pages 295-304), and Holmes from 1861 (see page 321). And these writers of short and long fiction are only the outstanding story-tellers in America between the beginning of the century and the years just after the Civil War.

**The novelists after the Civil War.** In a chapter such as this no complete survey is possible, for it would involve scores of writers and hundreds of books. The after-the-war movement started with a fresh treatment of native American material, and it moved in a great sweeping curve from the West down past the Gulf up through the southeastern states into New England, across to the Middle West, and back into the Ohio Valley, until every part of the country was represented by its descriptive story-tellers. The course of this newer provincial fiction is suggested by the mention of Mark Twain's "Jumping Frog" (book form 1867, California); "The Luck of Roaring Camp" of Bret Harte (book form 1870, California); G. W. Cable's "Old Creole Days" (1879, Louisiana); "Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings," by Joel Chandler Harris (1880, Georgia); "In the Tennessee Mountains," by Charles Egbert Craddock (1884); "In Ole Virginia," by Thomas Nelson Page

(1887); "A New England Nun," by Mary E. Wilkins (1891); "Main-Traveled Roads," by Hamlin Garland (1891, the Middle West); "Flute and Violin," by James Lane Allen (1891, the Ohio Valley).

**William Dean Howells (1837-1920): his life.** The outstanding American novelist of the last half century was William Dean Howells. Although he was an Easterner by residence for nearly half a century, he was the greatest contribution of the West—or what was West in his youth—to Eastern life and thought.

He was born in 1837 at Martins Ferry, Ohio,—the second of eight children. Unlike many another boy who has struggled into literary fame, young Howells found a ready sympathy with his ambitions at home. His mother he has described as the heart of the family and his father as the soul. His experience



WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

was less like Whitman's than like Bryant's. From childhood the printing-office was his school, and almost his only school, for the district teachers had little to offer a child of literary parentage, "whose sense was open to every intimation of beauty." Very early his desire for learning led him into what he called "self-conducted inquiries" in foreign languages; and with the help of a "sixteen-bladed grammar," a nondescript affair in many tongues, he acquired in turn a reading knowledge of Latin, Greek, Spanish, German, French, and Italian. Always he was writing, for his life was "filled with literature to bursting," and always imitating—now Pope, now Heine, now Cervantes, now Shakespeare.



**His early writing.** As a printer on country journals he had the chance to place his own wares before the public, often composing in type without ever putting pen to paper. His father encouraged him to contribute to journals of larger circulation than his own, and the experience naturally led him into regular newspaper-writing before he was of age. It led him also to Columbus, the state capital, where he reported the proceedings of the legislature and in time rose to the dignity of editorial writer. During these years of late youth and early manhood his aspirations were all in the direction of poetry, and his earliest book was a joint effort with John J. Piatt, "Poems of Two Friends" (1859). In 1860 Howells had five poems in the *Atlantic Monthly* and had no expectation of writing fiction; and it was another ten years, after the publication of several volumes of sketches and travel observations, before he was fairly launched on his real career.

**His book-loving friends.** In Columbus he had come by 1860 to a full enjoyment of an eager, book-loving group. He was working hard as a journalist, but his knowledge of lawmaking in Ohio did not arouse any real interest in the world of affairs. "What I wished to do always and evermore was to think and dream and talk literature, and literature only, whether in its form of prose or of verse, in fiction, or poetry, or criticism. I held it a higher happiness to stop at a street corner with a congenial young lawyer and enter upon a fond discussion of, say, De Quincey's essays than to prove myself worthy the respect of any most eminent citizen who knew not or love not De Quincey." There was a succession of friends with whom he could have this sort of pleasure, and there were houses in town where he could enjoy the finer pleasure of talking over with the girls the stories of Thackeray and George Eliot and Dickens as they appeared one after another in book or serial form. "It is as if we did nothing then but read late novels and current serials which it was essential for us to know one another's minds upon down to the instant; other things might wait, but these things were pressing."

**The appointment to Venice.** With the presidential candidacy of Lincoln, Howells became one of his campaign biographers, and after his election he received the appointment as United States consul to Venice. Upon his return to this country he became an Easterner, settling happily in Boston first as assistant editor and then as editor-in-chief of the *Atlantic Monthly*, from 1866 to 1881. This was a fulfillment beyond his highest hopes. The great New England group were at the height of their fame, and his connection with the best literary periodical of America brought him into contact with them all. He was ready to begin his own work as a writer of novels.

**Howells's two types of novels—the early pictures of American life.** For the next twenty years he was a thoroughly conventional artist, gaining satisfaction and giving pleasure through the exercise of his admirable technique. The books of this period were all the work of a well-trained, unprejudiced observer. "Venetian Life" and "Italian Journeys" were the first logical expression of his desire and his capacities—books of the same sort as "Bracebridge Hall" and "Outre-Mer" and "Views Afoot" and "Our Old Home" (see page 265). "A Foregone Conclusion" and "A Fearful Responsibility" simply cross the narrow bridge between description and fiction, but employ the same point of view and the same skill. Howells was interested in American character and in the nice distinctions between the different levels of refinement. In "Silas Lapham," his greatest novel, written before 1890, the blunt Vermonter is set in contrast with certain Boston aristocrats. He amasses a fortune, becomes involved in speculation, in business injustice, and in ruin. But whatever Howells had to say then of the forces behind government and business he said of powers as impersonal as gravitation. Business was business, and he seemed to feel that no one could control or change its ways.

**The later criticisms of American life.** However, when he was past fifty he underwent a social conversion. And when he wrote his next book about his favorite characters, the Marches,

he and they together risked "A Hazard of New Fortunes." He and they were no longer content to play at life under comfortable and protected circumstances. They went down into the great city, competed with strange and uncouth people, and learned something about poverty and something about justice. In fact they learned what went into such later stories of his as "Annie Kilburn" and "The Quality of Mercy" and "The World of Chance" and "A Traveler from Altruria" and "The Eye of a Needle," learning it all through the new vision gained from a great European. Writing from his heart of this conversion Mr. Howells says, in "My Literary Passions":

It is as if the best wine at this high feast, where I have sat so long, had been kept for the last and I need not deny a miracle in it in order to attest my skill in judging vintages. In fact I prefer to believe that my life has been full of miracles, and that the good has always come to me at the right time, so that I could profit most by it. I believe that if I had not turned the corner of my fiftieth year, when I first knew Tolstoy, I should not have been able to know him as fully as I did. He has been to me the final consciousness, which he speaks of so wisely in his essay on Life. I came in it to the knowledge of myself in ways I had not dreamt of before, and began at last to discern my relations to the race, without which we are nothing. The supreme art in literature had its highest effect in making me set art forever below humanity, and it is with the wish to offer the greatest homage to his heart and mind which any man can pay another, that I close this record with the name of Lyof Tolstoy.

There was no violent change in the material or method of his fiction-writing. It was simply enriched with a new purpose. He kept on writing stories which were interesting in themselves, but he made them reveal some of the wrongs which the less fortunate have to suffer. He made them show that the rules of the game in business and in law were not equally kind to rich and to poor. Yet he never lost his balance. He has written no novels as extreme as Sinclair's "Jungle," which ends with an excited speech on socialism, although he was for

a time a socialist; he has written nothing quite so insistent as Whitlock's "Turn of the Balance," although he has been keenly aware of the difference between justice and the workings of the legal system. Every story has contained a recognition that life is infinitely complex, with a great deal of redeeming good in it, though much of this is stupid and clumsy. Furthermore, he has written always out of his own experience and with all his old skill as a novelist, so that he has never done anything so clumsily commendable as Page's "John Marvel, Assistant" or anything so clearly prepared for by painstaking study as Churchill's "Inside of the Cup."

On the whole, it is surprising that novels of protest such as these attracted so little opposition. Never was a revolutionist received with such blind tolerance. The charm of his manner, the continued appearance of his books of travel and observation, and all the while the humorous presentation of his favorite characters, particularly the bumptious young business man and the whimsically incoherent American woman, beguiled his readers into thinking that Howells was quite harmless. Possibly because they have been less skillful and more pugnacious, novel after novel from younger hands has excited criticism and the healthy opposition which prove that the truth has struck home. Perhaps his lack of sensationalism or sentimentalism debar him from the "best-seller" class; but for fifty years he has been consistently followed by the best-reading class, and no novelist of the newer generation has been unconscious of his work.

The novel as a literary form is nearing the end of its second century of influence. It is a popular type which will very likely always attract more readers than any other form. Its history cannot possibly be kept up to date. Every year several books of fiction are published that "everybody" reads; and every intelligent body can well afford to invest time and interest in some of these—most of all teachers and students. If the present chapter stops at this point, it is for three chief reasons: (1) because the long career of Howells and his great

influence help to bring the chronicle well into the present period; (2) because the immense amount of material would force further discussion into either absurd brevity or unwieldy length; and (3) because without some reading of the fiction itself discussion is of slight value, and the reading of book after book is impossible for school students in connection with this subdivision of American literature. Even to develop the third paragraph in this chapter is out of the question, and in that none of the outstanding novelists of today are mentioned. Moreover, there are yet other subjects crying for attention. In a way, the novel is the favorite of the reading-public; yet it seems to have passed its highest popularity shortly after 1900. First the drama came forward with a new challenge to serious attention, and of late poetry has reëstablished itself as a living language.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Give examples as you can for each of the changing fashions in American literature mentioned in the first paragraph.
2. What proofs can you give that the short story is not a very recent innovation in American literature?
3. What poets in the West and the South began their work at just about the time when the new fiction-writers were appearing?
4. What other American authors besides Howells had the training of work as a printer?
5. What Ohio city other than Columbus has been mentioned in a preceding chapter as a center of literary activity before the Civil War?
6. What other American men of letters served as representatives of the United States abroad? (See page 109.)
7. What are the two types of novel written by Howells? What is the difference between them? What accounted for the change?
8. Why are Howells's later novels more effective than similar ones by his younger contemporaries?
9. In answering these questions the Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapters XX, XXV, and XXVII will be found helpful:



a. Howells's first book was a joint effort with John J. Piatt, in 1860, called "The Poems of Two Friends." What other American publications appeared in this year? What two important English publications? What important American author died in this year?

b. How many years elapsed between this date and the date of his first mention in the Chronological Outlines with his most important book written before 1890? How long before the "Rise of Silas Lapham" was published had he given up the editorship of the *Atlantic Monthly*?

c. How long after the "Rise of Silas Lapham" was published did "A Traveler from Altruria" appear? With what date of Oliver Wendell Holmes do you associate the latter year?

d. What two foreign countries formed an alliance in this year that bound them as allies in the World War?

e. Are you familiar with any of the works of a Belgian author who published a play in this same year?

f. With how many and which of the fiction-writers whose names appear for the first time from 1880 on are you familiar? Have you read any novels by them which you particularly enjoyed? If so, how did they compare in point of enjoyment with novels which you have read for this course?

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE LATER POETRY

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

One of the best fruits of the study of earlier poetry is the understanding it provides for reading the poetry of today, and the preparation for reading the poetry of tomorrow. Yet in a school course there is no room for more than the most general bird's-eye view, no time for a thorough study of single authors. Therefore, for the reading of the representative poets mentioned in this chapter the best books to go to at the start are certain well-edited collections and a few well-considered books of criticism. In the list that follows none are included that cannot be understood by intelligent school students.

*Collections*: Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson. The New Poetry, an Anthology. The Macmillan Company, 1917.

Louis Untermeyer. Modern American Poetry. Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1921.

Marguerite Wilkinson. New Voices. The Macmillan Company. 1919.

*Criticism*: Conrad Aiken. Scepticisms: Notes on Contemporary Poetry. Alfred A. Knopf. 1919.

Amy Lowell. Tendencies in Modern American Poetry. The Macmillan Company. 1917.

Louis Untermeyer. The New Era in American Poetry. Henry Holt and Company. 1919.

#### CHAPTER OUTLINE

The new interest in modern poetry  
The end of the nineteenth century  
Two children's poets  
Two poets of the coming century  
Purpose of this chapter  
Contemporary poetry not all of one kind  
Edward Arlington Robinson

- Robert Frost : his upbringing
  - His lyrics
  - His descriptions of New England
- Edgar Lee Masters : life and writing to 1915
  - "Spoon River Anthology"
  - Later works
  - His sober optimism
- Carl Sandburg : his life
  - His brutal frankness
  - His feeling for beauty and solemnity
- Vachel Lindsay and his gospel of beauty
  - His search for beauty in unpromising places
  - His moral seriousness
  - His inventive playfulness
- Amy Lowell : life and writings to 1919
  - Her interest in poetic experiments
  - Her agreements in theory with Poe
- Witter Bynner and "The New World"

**The new interest in modern poetry.** The last few years have seen the restoration of poetry as a living language. Not only have authors' readings taken the place of dramatic interpretations in the lecture market, but the audiences who flock to hear Tagore and Noyes and Masefield and Sandburg and Bynner and Lindsay and Frost go to listen to poems with which they are already familiar and to get that acquaintance with poets which ten years ago they coveted with playwrights and, further back, with novelists. The striking fact about the reading-public today is its reawakened zest for poetry.

In 1890 the English poetry-reading world was chiefly conscious of the passing away of its leading singers for the last half-century. It was a period of recalling such farewell poems as Emerson's "Terminus" and Longfellow's "Ultima Thule," Whitman's "November Boughs" and Whittier's "A Lifetime," Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar" and Browning's "Asolando." There was no group in the prime of life who were strong successors to this greater choir. Stedman, Aldrich, and Stoddard had courted the muse as a kind of foreign divinity

and enjoyed excursions into the distant land of her dwelling-place. But their poetry was a poetry of accomplishment—an adornment of life, and not a vital part of it (see pages 325–330). It was a period when people were tempted with some reason to dwell on the “good old days,” and for a while it seemed as though it would be long before the world would see their like again.

**The end of the nineteenth century.** The spirit of the times seemed to be expressed by a group of younger artists who were in revolt against Victorian literature and had a great deal to say on their favorite theme of art for art’s sake. They were occupied in composing intricate and ingenious poems. They were engrossed, like Masters’s “Petit, the Poet,” in writing

Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus,  
Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,  
Tick, tick, tick, what little iambics,  
While Homer and Whitman roared in the pines!

Some of them did pastels in prose, and many edited transitory little periodicals like the *Yellow Book*, the *Chap Book*, the *Lark*, and *Truth in Boston*. Fourteen of these came into existence in the United States in the first two months of 1897, and almost none of them survived till the Fourth of July of that year. Probably the only lines in any of them recalled by the readers of today are Gelett Burgess’s quatrain on the “purple cow.” The burden of these young poets was many words fairly spoken of “organic growth,” “development,” “progress,” “liberalism,” “freedom of speech,” and “independent thought”; and the chief product of their thinking was a frank and free Bohemianism, an honest unconventionality much more real than the diluted thing about which Stedman and Aldrich had rimed thirty years before.

**Two children’s poets.** Two men of the period who stand out in contrast with this conscious “new art” tendency were Eugene Field (1850–1895) and James Whitcomb Riley (1853–1916). Both wrote in the fresh spirit of the Middle West to

which they belonged, both were especially popular with children and with adults who enjoyed children's verse, and both were newspaper men.

In newspaper work Eugene Field holds an interesting place between the old-school humorists like Orpheus C. Kerr, Petroleum V. Nasby, and Josh Billings (see page 371), and the column writers of today, like Taylor, Adams, Don Marquis, Morley, and their fellows. It was on the *Chicago Daily News* that Field enjoyed his brief five years of popularity (from 1890 to 1895) as the editor of the well-known column "Sharps and Flats." "A Little Book of Profitable Tales," "A Little Book of Western Verse," "With Trumpet and Drum," and "Love Songs of Childhood" established his position with the public. He neither revolted from the older literary models nor imitated them. He was simply his engaging self, and youthful readers still enjoy his charm as they do the charm of Stevenson.

James Whitcomb Riley was well known before 1890 and held his public until his death in 1916. He wrote for the *Indianapolis Journal* a long succession of dialect poems. These resemble Lowell's "Biglow Papers" (see page 285) in pretending to come from the pen of an unschooled country man, though in subject matter they resemble only one of them, "The Courtin'"—the single "Biglow Paper" which was not written to influence public opinion on a national problem. His simple poems of simple emotion and sentiment were increasingly popular throughout his life—from the days of "The Old Swimmin' Hole and 'Leven More Poems" to those of "An Old Sweetheart of Mine." He deserves a modest place in history; certainly a greater one than he demanded when he described himself as the most famous poet ever born in Greenfield, Indiana.

**Two poets of the coming century.** The two American poets of the '90's who were most vigorous and original and who pointed most clearly toward the future rather than toward the past were Richard Hovey (1864-1900) and William Vaughn Moody (1869-1910). Both, like Field and Riley, belonged to



the Middle West, and both went to college in the East, wrote with growing power and promise, and died before reaching the prime of life.

The best nondramatic poetry of Hovey is contained in the three volumes of "Songs from Vagabondia," published jointly with Bliss Carman in 1894, 1896, and 1900, and in "Along the Trail" of 1898. Hovey was not an experimenter in new forms, and was just as unwilling to be a dabbler in dainty devices as he was to be an echo of the older poets. "It is not the mission of the poet," he wrote, "to write elegant canzonettas for the delectation of the *dilettanti*, but to comfort the sorrowful and hearten the despairing, to champion the oppressed and declare to humanity its inalienable rights, to lay open to the world the heart of man—all its heights and depths, all its glooms and glories, to reveal the beauty in things and breathe into his fellows a love of it." On the whole, he was more of a stimulator than a mere comforter. For a while he seemed content to sing the praises of boyish comradeship, but before long the good fellowship of youth became a symbol of something far larger than itself,

Of something potent burning through the earth,  
Of something vital in the procreant air.

So in his later years he looked beyond the springtime of the year and of the lives of college boys to the day when science, art, and religion should emancipate men in the truth that should set them free, and bring them in spite of delays to "the greater tomorrow." He was a poet of high spirits, yet of a sober optimism.

Moody's life, after boyhood in Indiana and college experience at Harvard, included long and repeated travels, varied and profound study, eight years of university teaching, and distinguished work as painter, poet, and dramatist. As a poet he was familiar with the wide range of the world's art and literature, but except for a few very early poems he was no man's imitator. He did not undertake, as Hovey did, to en-

courage or comfort his readers, but was rather, as a philosopher, trying to answer for himself the questions as to the source of life and its underlying laws and its goal. He believed that the souls of men were

Restless, plagued, impatient things,  
All dream and unaccountable desire,

simply because they were moving on toward something higher which was the end toward which creation was moving. Because his poems are not easy to read,—most of them,—Moody is a poets' poet. Their understanding of his deeper meanings makes them his best public. Yet through his influence on the rising and the risen poets of this latter generation Moody's influence is exerted on thousands who are all unconscious of it.

**Purpose of this chapter.** There is only one ground for justifying an approach to contemporary American poetry in a brief chapter at the end of a general history: it serves the purpose of a guideboard on a highway across the country. American literature was not concluded with the deaths of the great New England group, nor has it come to an end since then. The student should recognize this in his respect for the fine promise of what is now being written, and he should be intelligent enough to see that literature need not be old to be fit for study—that it is not only absurd but vicious to assume (as used to be said, with a difference, of the Indian) that there is no good poet but a dead poet.

**Contemporary poetry not all of one kind.** Contemporary poetry is not all of one kind, nor is it chiefly characterized by defiant revolt against old forms and old ideas. It is true that in all branches of art new methods and new points of view are being advanced. In music, in painting, in sculpture, in stage-setting and costuming, men with new and striking theories have shocked and surprised quite as many as they have edified, and have given rise to the same sort of protest indulged in by those who talk as if all modern poetry were typified by extravagance. But in poetry most of the recent work has not been wantonly

unconventional, most of the more distinguished verse has not been "free," and most of the men and women who have written free verse have shown and have practiced a firm mastery of the established forms. These few pages are given over to a few poets who represent tendencies. They are generally recognized as leading figures, though critics would be sure to differ in the make-up of so brief a list.

**Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869- )**. Edwin Arlington Robinson, the oldest of this group, was born in the same year with Moody and is now in the prime of life. The Tilbury of many of his poems is really the town of his upbringing—Gardiner, Maine. It was an unusual place, but not a unique one—an Old World village in America. The atmosphere of Puritanism had not been blown away from it, and it still felt the influence of one outstanding family. When "the squire" passed,

We people on the pavement looked at him;  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean-favored, and imperially slim.

After an uncompleted course at Harvard Mr. Robinson was struggling in business until, from 1905 to 1910, he held a post in the New York Customhouse on the nomination of President Roosevelt, who was one of the earliest to recognize his distinction. Of late years he has been a resident of Brooklyn.

As a matter of literary history the most striking fact in connection with Mr. Robinson is that the poetry-reading public has been newly developed since he began to write. Although his first published volume appeared in 1897, "The Children of the Night," and his second, "Captain Craig" in 1902, it was not until "The Town down the River" in 1910 that his recognition began to come; and with the re-publication of "Captain Craig" in 1915 the larger public became aware of a volume that had been in print for thirteen years. In 1921 he won the Pulitzer prize "for the best volume of verse published during the year by an American author," this being his "Collected Poems."

In contrast with most of the poets of the twentieth century in America, Mr. Robinson is more interested in human nature than he is in social questions. He looks past the confusions of village and state and nation to the minds and hearts of the individual people who inhabit them. He is a keen critic of their defects, and he does not spare them; yet on the whole he is positive and hopeful.

Take on yourself  
But your sincerity, and you take on  
Good promise for all climbing; fly for truth,  
And hell shall have no storm to crush your flight,  
No laughter to vex down your loyalty.

This is the note through all Robinson's poems and plays. His dislike of those who can see nothing but winter and old age and shadow and sorrow makes him often impatient with the preachers of gloom; but, without preaching himself, he is only trying to substitute light for shadow, laughter for despair; he is only saying with Larry Scammon in one of his plays:

"Stop me if I am too cheerful; but at the same time, if I can instil the fertile essence of Hope into this happy household, for God's sake, let me do it. . . . You had better—all of you—begin to get yourselves out of your own light, and cease to torment your long-bedevelled heads with the dark doings of bogies that have no real existence."

As a craftsman Mr. Robinson has won distinction by his simple directness. He uses the old iambic measures almost entirely and a conversational sentence structure. There are few "purple patches" in his poetry, but there are many clear flashes. His work is like a May day in his old boyhood town—not balmy, but bracing, with lots of sparkle on the sea and the taste of the east wind through it all.

**Robert Frost (1875— ):** his upbringing. Robert Frost is known as the author of three books of verse: "A Boy's Will," 1913; "North of Boston," 1914; and "Mountain Interval," 1916. He is known also—and rightly—as the voice and embodiment

of rural New England. Yet he was born in San Francisco, his mother was born in Edinburgh, he first came to New England at the age of ten, and he lived for the next eight schoolboy years in a mill town, Lawrence, Massachusetts. Nevertheless, his memory seems to have been sensitive only to the aspects of country life in the regions north of Boston—the regions trod by nine generations on his father's side of the family. And so it was that though his first two volumes were published in London, there is no local trace of the old country in them, nothing in them that he had not known in farm or village between 1885 and 1912, when he set sail with his wife and children for a residence of two and a half years in England.

The common statement that Mr. Frost is content solely to present the appearances of New England life should be qualified in two ways: the first is that his earliest book, "A Boy's Will," does not do this at all; the second is that while "North of Boston" and "Mountain Interval" are pictures of New England life, the truth in them is by no means limited to New England, but is pertinent to people anywhere, although deeply tinged with the hue of that particular district.

**His lyrics.** "A Boy's Will," a little volume of sixty-three pages, is made up of thirty-two lyrics, each of them complete and most of them lovely. They are not, however, independent of each other, although it is an open question how many readers would see their relationship if this were not indicated in the table of contents. It is the record of the experience of a young artist who marries, withdraws to the country, revels in the isolation of winter, in the coming of spring, and in the farm beauties of summer. This isolation, however, cannot satisfy him long, so the youth and his bride return to the world with misgivings:

Out through the fields and the woods  
And over the walls I have wended;  
I have climbed the hills of view  
And looked at the world, and descended;  
I have come by the highway home,  
And lo, it is ended.



. . . . .  
Ah, when to the heart of man  
Was it ever less than a treason  
To go with the drift of things,  
To yield with a grace to reason,  
And bow and accept the end  
Of a love or a season?

This book does not represent the work or the workmanship of Robert Frost as it appears in his later volumes, but it does represent Robert Frost himself:

A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth.

**His descriptions of New England.** The second volume, "North of Boston," is twice as long as "A Boy's Will" and contains half as many titles. There would be nothing in this mathematical formula if it did not carry with it a real difference in content. But this second book is made up not of lyrics, but of little etchings of New England life. This is the grim New England which the poet attempted to shut out in "Love and a Question":

But whether or not a man was asked  
To mar the love of two  
By harboring woe in the bridal house,  
The bridegroom wished he knew.

It presents the death of a farm laborer, the maddened bereavement of a mother whose child is buried within sight of the house, the black prospect faced by a household drudge who dreads the insanity which is an inherited blight in her family. They are not amiable pictures, but they are not all equally grim. "The Mountain" tells of a township of sixty voters with only a fringe of level land around the looming pile. This dominates life, limits it, and rises above it, for few have either time or curiosity to reach the top. "The Black Cottage" presents

a widowed relict of the Civil War who knew only her sacrifice and whose unthinking religion was as hazy as her political creed. With liberalism in the parish, the preacher was inclined to omit "descended into Hades" from the ritual:

. . . We could drop them  
Only—there was the bonnet in the pew.  
Such a phrase couldn't have meant much to her.  
But suppose she had missed it from the Creed  
As a child misses the unsaid Good-night,  
And falls asleep with heartache—how should I feel?

Of another sort are the poems which have most of outdoors in them: "Mending Wall," the symbol of barriers between properties which the winters throw down; "After Apple Picking," the weariness forced upon the farmer in his effort to husband an embarrassment of orchard riches; and "The Woodpile," with its suggestion of the slow processes of nature contrasted with the passing efforts of man. The woodpile is discovered far out in a swamp, long abandoned and vine-covered:

. . . I thought that only  
Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks  
Could so forget his handiwork on which  
He spent himself, the labour of his axe,  
And leave it there far from a useful fireplace  
To warm the frozen swamp as best it could  
With the slow smokeless burning of decay.

The last volume, "Mountain Interval," is something of a composite, with elements from both the former two. One reads Mr. Frost's pages thoughtfully and leaves them in a thoughtful mood. Not all are grim, but very few are gay. They have the rock-ribbed austerity of the country from which they spring, and some of its beauty too.

Edgar Lee Masters (1869— ): life and writing to 1915. Edgar Lee Masters was born in Kansas. In the next year his family moved to Illinois, which is his real "native" state. As

a boy he had wide opportunities for reading. At the age of twenty-one he entered Knox College and plunged with zest into the study of the classics. Eventually he entered on a successful career as a Chicago attorney. Yet the law did not take complete possession of him; he has always been a devoted reader of Greek literature. "Songs and Satires," published in 1916, contains a few lyrics from a volume of 1898 which was printed, but through an accident of the trade never put on sale. One of these ends with the significant stanza:

Helen of Troy, Greek art  
Hath made our heart thy heart,  
Thy love our love.  
For poesy, like thee,  
Must fly and wander free  
As the wild dove.

Mr. Masters's second venture was a poetic drama in 1900, "Maximilian," a tragedy in verse which won a few sympathetic reviews but no wide reading. Other works followed in the next fifteen years, some in law and some in literature. And finally, in 1915, appeared the "Spoon River Anthology." This is in all probability the most widely circulated book of new poems in the history of American literature; others may have achieved a greater total of copies during a long career, but it is doubtful whether any others have equaled fifty thousand within three years of publication.

"Spoon River Anthology." The most valuable single utterance on this much-discussed work is the preface of Mr. Masters in "Toward the Gulf," with its inscription to William Marion Reedy. Mr. Masters had submitted various contributions to Reedy's *Mirror*, but had received most of them back with friendly appeals for something fresh. The first five Spoon River epitaphs were written almost casually in answer to this repeated challenge. At the same time they were a more than casual following of a hint from the Greek: a "resuscitation of the Greek epigrams, ironical and tender, satirical and sym-

pathetic," assembled into a final collection of nearly two hundred and fifty brief units, each a comment on his own life by one of the Spoon River townsfolk, as he might have made it after death. These represent the chief types in an American country town.

The "Anthology" has been violently attacked as a book without faith or hope, though each attack of this sort has proved that the critic either had not read the book through or did not understand it. As a matter of fact the most impressive element in the book, and the one which bulks largest in the last quarter of it, is the victorious idealists. There is Davis Matlock, who decided to live life out like a god, sure of immortality. There is Tennessee Claflin Shope, who asserted the sovereignty of his own soul, and Samuel Gardner, who determined to live largely in token of his ample spirit, and the Village Atheist, who knew that only those who strive mightily could possess eternal life, and Lydia Humphrey, who in her church found the vision of the poets. In spite of the protests of readers who were so discouraged with the tone of the earlier portion that they never progressed to the conclusion, the book achieved its great circulation among a tolerant public, and enviable applause from the most discriminating critics.

**Later works.** "Spoon River" established Mr. Masters's reputation and prepared the public for further thrills and shocks in the volumes to follow. This expectation has been only half fulfilled. The certainty of a public hearing has naturally encouraged the poet to more rapid production, but the subsequent books—"Songs and Satires" and "The Great Valley" of 1916, "Toward the Gulf" of 1918, "Starved Rock" of 1919, and "The Domesday Book" of 1920, and "The Open Sea"—have been divided both in tone and content between the informality for which Mr. Masters was known in his earlier work and the conventional finish of his unknown, earliest style. In his choice of subjects, however, Mr. Masters has supplied the shocks and thrills expected, dealing at times with various aspects of life that might better be confined to the court room and the clinic.

**His sober optimism.** So much for the negative side of Mr. Masters's work. On the positive side the greater weight of his work lies in poems of searching analysis, dramatic monologues suggestive of Browning in form as well as matter. Whether or not they are poetry is an incidental question; they challenge attention as a form of literature whatever the decision. The reader of Mr. Masters as a whole is bound to discover in the end that all these analyses are searchings into the mystery of life. This quality appears in "The Loom" as it does in "The Cry":

There's a voice in my heart that cries and cries for tears.  
It is not a voice, but a pain of many years.  
It is not a pain, but the rune of far-off spheres.


. . . . .  
Deep in darkness the bulb under mould and clod  
Feels the sun in the sky and pushes above the sod;  
Perhaps this cry in my heart is nothing but God!

And he is bound to confess that Mr. Masters, instead of being a cynic, is a sober optimist. Take the last lines of the opening and closing poems in "Toward the Gulf":

And forever as long as the river flows toward the Gulf  
Ulysses reincarnate shall come  
To guard our places of sleep,  
Till East and West shall be one in the west of heaven  
and earth!

. . . . .  
"And after that?"

"Another spring—that's all I know myself,  
There shall be springs and springs!"

 **Carl Sandburg (1878- ):** his life. Carl Sandburg, the only American of the first rank of the modern group of poets who has written entirely in free verse, was born in Galesburg, Illinois, in 1878. He served in the Spanish-American War, and after it for three years went to Lombard College in Galesburg. He has had many experiences and many ways of earning money,



but has found his way into the profession of journalism and is at present on the staff of the *Chicago Daily News*. His first volume of poems, "Chicago Poems," appeared in 1916; the second, "Cornhuskers," in 1918; the third, "Smoke and Steel," in 1920; the fourth, "Slabs of the Sunburnt West," in 1922.

**His brutal frankness.** On the appearance of the first volume and its opening lines,

Hog Butcher for the World,  
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,  
Player with Railroads and the Nation's  
Freight Handler,

many poetry-lovers exclaimed in protest, and all too many, at least for a while, based their prejudice against Sandburg on their willingness to know no more of him than what they gained from a glance at his first page. But this is a less important aspect of him. As a matter of fact he has other much more significant traits.

Some of his poetry, to be sure, is crude and brutal in form like the life which it presents. The ugliness of Chicago, the rough-and-ready tactics of Billy Sunday, he describes and answers in language of their own kind. It is a phase of what has been done over and over in literary history when the poets have chosen to use what up to that time had been considered unliterary language and have made it literary by adopting it.

**His feeling for beauty and solemnity.** But Sandburg is devoted to beauty as well as strength and has written many poems of sheer loveliness, as for example:

#### THE YEAR

A storm of white petals,  
Buds throwing open baby fists  
Into hands of broad flowers.  
  
Red roses running upward,  
Clambering to the clutches of life  
Soaked in crimson.

Rabbles of tattered leaves  
Holding golden flimsy hopes  
Against the tramlings  
Into the pits and gullies.

Hoarfrost and silence:  
Only the muffling  
Of winds dark and lonesome—  
Great lullabies to the long sleepers.

As a matter of fact he dares to treat life frankly in many of his poems because on the whole he likes it and believes in it. People who dodge the issue of describing things as they are are usually afraid to face the facts, and this is the case with many romantic poets; but to Sandburg life with all its commonplace and all its ugliness is full of beauty and full of solemnity. So in his own fresh way he sings the song of democracy and eternity: the pathos of the long-suffering toilers, and the sober hope that the future holds out. The range of illustration is wide. These two will perhaps serve as well as any.

#### COOL TOMBS

When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs, he forgot the copperheads and the assassin . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street, cash and collateral turned ashes . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? does she remember? . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries, cheering a hero or throwing confetti and blowing tin horns . . . tell me if the lovers are losers . . . tell me if any get more than the lovers . . . in the dust . . . in the cool tombs.

## A FENCE

Now the stone house on the lake front is finished and the workmen are beginning the fence.

The palings are made of iron bars with steel points that can stab the life out of any man who falls on them.

As a fence, it is a masterpiece, and will shut off the rabble and all vagabonds and hungry men and all wandering children looking for a place to play.

Passing through the bars and over the steel points will go nothing except Death and the Rain and Tomorrow.

**Vachel Lindsay (1879- ) and his gospel of beauty.** Vachel Lindsay, born in Springfield, Illinois, of which until his removal, in 1922, he has been the most devoted and distinguished citizen since Lincoln, studied for three years at Hiram College in Ohio, and then for five years as an art student in Chicago and New York. In 1906 he took his first long tramp through Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas, and in 1908 a second through the northeastern states. During these two, as in his latest like excursion through the Western wheat belt, he traveled as a minstrel, observing the following rules:

1. Keep away from the cities.
2. Keep away from the railroads.
3. Have nothing to do with money. Carry no baggage.
4. Ask for dinner about quarter after eleven.
5. Ask for supper, lodging, and breakfast about quarter of five.
6. Travel alone.
7. Be neat, truthful, civil, and on the square.
8. Preach the Gospel of Beauty.

These appeared at the head of a little pamphlet entitled "Rhymes to be Traded for Bread," the only baggage he carried besides a further printed statement called "The Gospel of Beauty." In smiling defense of his course Mr. Lindsay has said that up to date there has been no established method for implanting beauty in the heart of the average American.

*"Until such a way has been determined upon by a competent committee, I must be pardoned for taking my own course and trying any experiment I please."* Mr. Lindsay has not limited himself to this way of circulating his ideas. He has posted his poems on billboards, recited them from soap-boxes and on the vaudeville stage, and has even descended to select club audiences.

His books to 1922 were nine in number and, according to his own advice, are to be read in the following order: "A Handy Guide for Beggars," "Adventures while Preaching the Gospel of Beauty," "The Art of the Moving Picture," "General William Booth Enters into Heaven," "The Congo," "The Chinese Nightingale," "The Golden Whales of California," "The Daniel Jazz and Other Poems," and "The Golden Book of Springfield." The first three are prose statements of his social and religious philosophy; the latter six are poems. The title of the last of these is a reaffirmation of what appears in many of his poems and of what he stated in the "Gospel of Beauty" (1914): "The things most worth while are one's own hearth and neighborhood. We should make our own home and neighborhood the most democratic, the most beautiful, and the holiest in the world."

The first point about the poetry of Mr. Lindsay is that in it he lives up to his own instructions. He keeps quite as close to his own district as Mr. Masters and Mr. Frost do. As a kind of an evangelist he tries to implant beauty in the heart of the average American. Yet "implant" is not the proper word; his own word is "establish," for he reënforces an inborn sense of beauty in hearts that are unconscious of it, and he reveals it in the lives of those whom the average American overlooks or despises. On the one hand, he carries whole audiences into an actual participation in his recitals, and on the other, he discloses the "scum of the earth" as poets and mystics.

**His search for beauty in unpromising places.** Thus "General William Booth Enters into Heaven" tells of Booth's passage to the skies as it is seen and felt by a Salvation Army sym-

pathizer. Booth with his big bass drum, followed by a motley slum crowd, leads to the most impressively magnificent place within the ken of a small-town Middle Westerner. This is an Illinois courthouse square. As a matter of fact, such a square is usually bleak, treeless, dust-blown, mud-moated—the dome of the courthouse in the middle, flanked on all sides by ugly brick blocks and alternating wooden shacks with corrugated iron false fronts; but this is splendor to the mind of the narrator. And so in all reverence he says:

(*Sweet flute music*)

Jesus came from out the court-house door,  
Stretched his hands above the passing poor.  
Booth saw not, but led his queer ones there  
Round and round the mighty court-house square.

From this scene General Booth ascends into heaven.

"The Congo" is a similar piece of interpretation. Few types could seem more hopeless than the levee negroes; yet through them Mr. Lindsay makes a study of their race. In a drunken saloon crowd he sees *the basic savagery* which back in the Congo forests displays itself in picturesque poetry stuff. In a group of crapshooters who laugh down a police raid he finds *the irrepressible high spirits* which carry the negroes in imagination back to a regal Congo cakewalk, and in the exhortations of an African evangelist he sees the same *hope of religion* which the slave brought with him from his native soil. Once again, the "Chinese Nightingale" is written in the same spirit, this time accounting for the Chinese laundryman's tireless industry through the fact that he is living in a world of oriental romance while his iron pounds in the dead of night.

**His moral seriousness.** Mr. Lindsay's poetry has two chief aspects, sometimes separated, sometimes compounded. One of these is a moral seriousness. He might be called an ideally provincial character. He chooses to express himself in terms of his home and neighborhood, but his interests move out through a series of concentric circles which include his city,



his state, America, and the world federation. The poems on Springfield, therefore, are of a piece with the poems on "America Watching the War" and those on "America at War." "The Soul of the City," with Mr. Lindsay's own drawings, is quite as interesting as any of the poems above mentioned. "Springfield Magical" suggests the source of his inspiration:

In this, the City of my Discontent,  
 Sometimes there comes a whisper from the grass,  
 "Romance, Romance—is here. No Hindu town  
 Is quite so strange. No Citadel of Brass  
 By Sinbad found, held half such love and hate;  
 No picture-palace in a picture-book  
 Such webs of Friendship, Beauty, Greed and Fate!"

"The Proud Farmer," "The Illinois Village," and "On the Building of Springfield"—three poems which conclude the General William Booth volume—are all on his favorite theme and were favorites with his farmhouse auditors.

His poems relating to the war reveal him as an ardent democrat, a hater of tyranny, a peace-loving socialist, and, in the end, like millions of his countrymen, a combatant pacifist, but none the less a pacifist in the larger sense. A pair of stanzas, "Concerning Emperors," furnish a very pretty cue both to himself and his convictions. The first in fervent seriousness prays for new regicides like those who did away with Charles I; the second states the case unsmilingly, but as it might be put to any newsboy, concluding:

And yet I cannot hate the Kaiser (I hope you understand).  
 Yet I chase the thing he stands for with a brickbat in my hand.

**His inventive playfulness.** This leads naturally to the other type—his verses of fancy and whimsy, like the group called the "Christmas Tree," "loaded with pretty toys," or the twenty poems in which the moon is the chief figure of speech. And these lead naturally to his distinctive work in connection with poetic form, his fanciful and often whimsical experiments in

restoring the half-chanted Greek choral odes to modern usage—what W. B. Yeats calls, “the primitive singing of music” (expounding it charmingly in the volume “Ideas of Good and Evil”). Mr. Lindsay, in the “Congo” volume, has indicated on some of the margins ways in which the verses might be chanted. Before many audiences he has illustrated his intent with awkwardly convincing effectiveness. And with the “Poem Games,” printed with the “Chinese Nightingale,” he has actually enlisted unsuspecting audiences as choruses and sent them home thrilled and amused at their awakened poetic feeling. Mr. Lindsay’s theories are indicated in the introductions to the two books just mentioned. They are briefly stated and should be read by every student of his work. Like most of the developments in modern poetry they are very new only in being a revival of something very old, but they partake of their author’s genial, informal, democratic nature in being very American. Among the contemporary poets who are likely to leave an individual impress on American literature, Mr. Lindsay, to use a good Americanism, is one of the few who “will certainly bear watching.”

**Amy Lowell (1874—): life and writings to 1922.** Miss Amy Lowell was born in Brookline, Massachusetts. James Russell Lowell was a cousin of her grandfather, and she numbers among her relatives her mother’s father, Abbott Lawrence, minister to England, and a brother, Abbott Lawrence Lowell, president of Harvard. General reading and wide travel were the most important factors in her education. In 1902, at the age of twenty-eight, she decided to devote herself to poetry, and for the next eight years she studied and wrote without attempting publication. Her first verse was printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1910, and her first volume, “A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass” was published in 1912. Her further volumes up to 1920 were “Sword Blades and Poppy Seed” (1914), “Six French Poets” (1915), “Men, Women, and Ghosts” (1916), “Tendencies in Modern American Poetry” (1917), “Can Grande’s Castle” (1918), “Pictures of the Floating World”

(1919), and "Legends" (1921),—in all six volumes of verse and two of prose criticism on French and American poetry.

**Her interest in poetic experiments.** She has championed the cause of modern poetry and has fought the conventions of Victorian verse wherever she has met them, and in her liking for experiment and her absorption in technique she has taken up the cudgels successively for free verse, for the theories of Imagism, and for polyphonic prose. She has been most closely identified with the activities of the Imagist poets,—three Englishmen, two Anglicized Americans, and herself,—and it is therefore well to summarize the six objects to which they committed themselves: (1) to use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, (2) to create new rhythms as the expression of new moods, (3) to allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject (within the limits of good taste), (4) to present an image (hence the name "Imagist"), (5) to produce poetry that is hard and clear, (6) to insist on concentration as the essence of poetry.

A stanza from "Before the Altar," the opening poem in her first book, serves to illustrate her technique as an Imagist:

His sole condition  
 Love and poverty.  
 And while the moon  
 Swings slow across the sky,  
 Athwart a waving pine tree,  
 And soon  
 Tips all the needles there  
 With silver sparkles, bitterly  
 He gazes, while his soul  
 Grows hard with thinking of the  
     poorness of his dole.

The fourth section of "Spring Day" (the poem in "Men, Women, and Ghosts" which begins with the much-discussed "Bath") is an example of what was, according to one critic, "the first appearance in English of 'polyphonic prose'":

## MIDDAY AND AFTERNOON

Swirl of crowded streets. Shock and recoil of traffic. The stock-still brick façade of an old church, against which the waves of people lurch and withdraw. Flare of sunshine down side-streets. Eddies of light in the windows of chemists' shops, with their blue, gold, purple jars, darting colors far into the crowd. Loud bangs and tremors, murmurings out of high windows, whirring of machine belts, blurring of horses and motors. A quick spin and shudder of brakes on an electric car, and the jar of a church-bell knocking against the metal blue of the sky. I am a piece of the town, a bit of blown dust, thrust along with the crowd. Proud to feel the pavement under me, reeling with feet. Feet tripping, skipping, lagging, dragging, plodding doggedly or springing up and advancing on firm, elastic insteps. A boy is selling papers, I smell them clean and new from the press. They are fresh like the air, and pungent as tulips and narcissus.

The blue sky pales to lemon, and great tongues of gold blind the shop-windows, putting out their contents in a flood of flame.

Yet, although Miss Lowell's reputation rests mainly on her experiments in novel and striking poetic forms, most of her work has been written in conformity with classic traditions. The opening volume is all in common rhythms, and so is most of the second, and quite half of the third. The fourth alone is devoted to a new form; "Can Grande's Castle" contains four long poems in polyphonic prose. The tendency is clearly in the direction of the new methods, but thus far the balance is about even between the new and the old.

**Her agreements in theory with Poe.** As to subject matter, Miss Lowell's theory is Poe's: that poetry should not make its main business to teach either facts or morals, but should confine itself to the realm of the emotions and be dedicated to beauty; it is a stained-glass window, a colored transparency. And the poet is a nonsocial being who

spurns life's human friendships to profess  
Life's loneliness of dreaming ecstasy.

Like Poe she limits herself to the production of lyrics and tales and resorts not infrequently to extravagant flights of fancy. And, again like Poe, Miss Lowell is to a high degree bookishly literary in her choice and treatment of subjects. Her place in literature is largely that of an experimenter whose work when least self-conscious has both substance and charm.

Witter Bynner (1881— ) and "The New World." Witter Bynner was born in Brooklyn and is a graduate of Harvard in the class of 1902. He took the impress of his university and recorded it not only in "An Ode to Harvard" (1907)—reprinted in "Young Harvard and Other Poems"—but also in the two plays that followed, "Tiger" (1913) and "The Little King" (1914), neither of which have anything to do with Harvard, but both of which reflect the intelligent interest in drama encouraged at that seat of learning. Aside from "Iphigenia in Tauris" (1915), his remaining work in which his real distinction lies is the single poem "The New World" (1915) and the collection "Grenstone Poems" (1917). Into both of these are woven threads of the same story,—the poet's love and marriage to Celia, the inspiration which comes to him from her finer nature, the birth and loss of their child, the death of Celia, his dull bereavement, the dedication of his life to the democracy which Celia had taught him to understand.

"Grenstone Poems" is a series of little lyrics comparable in some respects to Frost's "A Boy's Will." They are wholly individual in tone, presenting in brief units, nearly two hundred in number, the quaint and lovely elements in the humor and the tragedy of life. "The New World," in contrast, contains by implication much of this, but is constructed in nine sections which trace the progressive steps in the poet's idealization of America. Always Celia's imagination leads far in advance of his own. Again and again as he strives to follow, his triumphant ascent reaches as its climax what to her is a lower round in the ladder. Two passages suggest the theme in the abstract, though the beauty of the poem lies chiefly in the far implications of definite scenes and episodes. The first is a speech of Celia's:



It is my faith that God is our own dream  
 Of perfect understanding of the soul.  
 It is my passion that, alike through me  
 And every member of eternity,  
 The source of God is sending the same stream.  
 It is my peace that when my life is whole,  
 God's life shall be completed and supreme.

The second, with which this chapter may well conclude, is in the poet's own words:

In temporary pain  
 The age is bearing a new breed  
 Of men and women, patriots of the world  
 And one another. Boundaries in vain,  
 Birthrights and countries, would constrain  
 The old diversity of seed  
 To be diversity of soul.  
 O mighty patriots, maintain  
 Your loyalty!—till flags unfurled  
 For battle shall arraign  
 The traitors who unfurled them, shall remain  
 And shine over an army with no slain,  
 And men from every nation shall enroll  
 And women—in the hardihood of peace!  
 What can my anger do but cease?  
 Whom shall I fight and who shall be my enemy  
 When he is I and I am he?

Let me have done with that old God outside  
 Who watched with preference and answered prayer,  
 The Godhead that replied  
 Now here, now there,  
 Where heavy cannon were  
 Or coins of gold!  
 Let me receive communion with all men,  
 Acknowledging our one and only soul!  
 For not till then  
 Can God be God, till we ourselves are whole.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What was true in the years near 1890 about the successors to the greater English and American poets of the Victorian period?

2. What characterized much of the poetry toward the end of the century?

3. What are some generalizations that may not be truly made about contemporary poetry?

4. What kinds of experiences in Robert Frost's life has he not used as material for his poetry? What brief story lies behind the lyrics in "A Boy's Will"? What kinds of poems prevail in "North of Boston" and "Mountain Interval"?

5. What has been Masters's best-known volume? Was it his first book of poetry? On what grounds and with what fairness has it been harshly criticized? What are the excellent features of his poetry?

6. Is there a reasonable relation between the "brutality" of some of Sandburg's poems and the subjects he treats in them? In what other kinds is there an evident harmony between the way he writes and subjects he writes about? Has he a prevailing form?

7. What has been unusual about the ways in which Lindsay has brought his poetry to the public? In what common or lowly types does Lindsay find a love of beauty? In what respects is he a provincial character?

8. What experiments in poetic form has Miss Lowell been specially interested in? In what respects does her theory of poetry agree with Edgar Allan Poe's?

9. Around what ideal character has Bynner written many of his poems? In what volumes of poetry? Do you see any likeness in the passage quoted at the end of the chapter to Whitman's way of thinking and writing?

10. The Chronological Outlines at the close of Chapter XXVII will be found useful in answering the following questions:

a. In what year did the present movement in poetry begin? With what volume? Had any poets of this movement written before that date?

b. What books between 1910 and 1920 are written about definite parts of the country? Which are related to the region that you live in?

c. What two works between 1910 and 1920 are written about great American characters?

d. What English novelists writing in this period are best known to you?

# SECTION VI

DATES	AMERICAN PUBLICATIONS	AMERICAN LITERARY HISTORY
1890-1900	<p>HOWELLS: A Boy's Town, 1890  HOLMES: Over the Teacups, 1891  HAMLIN GARLAND: Main-Traveled Roads, 1891  MARY E. WILKINS: A New England Nun, 1891  HOWELLS: A Traveler from Altruria, 1894  MARK TWAIN: Pudd'nhead Wilson, 1894;  Joan of Arc, 1896; Following the Equator, 1897  DELAND: Old Chester Tales, 1898  PAUL LEICESTER FORD: Janice Meredith, 1899  WINSTON CHURCHILL: Richard Carvel, 1899  BOOTH TARKINGTON: The Gentleman from Indiana, 1899</p>	<p>Lowell died, 1891  Whittier died, 1892  Whitman died, 1892  Holmes died, 1894  Formation of the Theater Syndicate monopoly in the United States, 1895  Mrs. Stowe died, 1896  Mark Twain went round the world, 1896</p>
1900-1910	<p>MARY JOHNSTON: To Have and to Hold, 1900  CHURCHILL: The Crisis, 1901  FRANK NORRIS: The Octopus, 1901  NORRIS: The Pit, 1903  CHURCHILL: The Crossing, 1903  DELAND: Dr. Lavendar's People, 1903  EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON: Captain Craig, 1902  EDITH WHARTON: The House of Mirth, 1905  WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY: The Great Divide, 1906  CHURCHILL: Coniston, 1906  MARK TWAIN: Christian Science; Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven, 1907  CHARLES RANN KENNEDY: The Servant in the House, 1908  PAGE: John Marvel, Assistant, 1909</p>	<p>Joel C. Harris died, 1908  The New Theater, New York, 1909-1911</p>
1910-1920	<p>DELAND: The Iron Woman, 1911  WHARTON: Ethan Frome, 1911; The Custom of the Country, 1913  AMY LOWELL: A Dome of Many Coloured Glass, 1912  CHURCHILL: The Inside of the Cup, 1913  VACHEL LINDSAY: General William Booth Enters into Heaven, 1913  ROBERT FROST: A Boy's Will, 1913; North of Boston, 1914  LINDSAY: The Gospel of Beauty; The Congo and Other Poems, 1914  EDGAR LEE MASTERS: Spoon River Anthology, 1915  WITTER BYNNER: The New World, 1915  CARL SANDBURG: Chicago Poems, 1916  MASTERS: Songs and Satires; The Great Valley, 1916  FROST: Mountain Interval, 1916  AMY LOWELL: Men, Women, and Ghosts, 1916  GARLAND: A Son of the Middle Border, 1917  CABLE: Lovers of Louisiana, 1918  SANDBURG: Cornhuskers, 1918  AMY LOWELL: Can Grande's Castle, 1918  MASTERS: Toward the Gulf, 1918;  Starved Rock, 1919; The Domesday Book, 1920  SANDBURG: Smoke and Steel, 1920  LINDSAY: The Golden Whales of California, 1920  PERCY MACKAYE: George Washington,</p>	<p>The overthrow of the Theater Syndicate, 1910  Mark Twain died, 1910  Joaquin Miller died, 1913  Howells died, 1920</p>

## SECTION VI

ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LITERATURE	HISTORICAL EVENTS
<p>Ibsen: Hedda Gabler, 1890  Hardy: Tress of the D'Urbervilles, 1891  Kipling: The Light that Failed, 1891; Barrack-Room Ballads, 1892  Tennyson died, 1892  Ibsen: The Master Builder, 1892  Maeterlinck: Pélleas and Mélisande, 1894  Hardy: Jude the Obscure, 1895  Gladstone died, 1898</p>	<p>Population of the United States 62,654,302, in 1890  Bismarck dismissed, 1890  International Copyright Act, 1890  Gladstone, prime minister for the second time, 1893-1894  Grover Cleveland, president 1893-1897  Dreyfus affair (1894-1906)  Franco-Russian Alliance, 1894  William McKinley, president, 1897-1901  SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR, 1898  Boer War, 1899-1902  First Hague Peace Conference, 1899  Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah admitted to the Union, between 1890 and 1900</p>
<p>Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim, 1900;  The Typhoon, 1903  W. H. Hudson: Green Mansions, 1904  H. G. Wells: Kipps, 1905  George Bernard Shaw: Three Plays for Puritans, 1906  Galsworthy: The Country House, 1907  Arnold Bennett: Buried Alive; The Old Wives' Tale, 1908  Shaw: Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, 1908  Wells: Tono Bungay, 1909  Galsworthy: Fraternity, 1909  Maeterlinck: The Blue Bird, 1909  Masefield: The Tragedy of Nan, 1909</p>	<p>John Hay (Secretary of State) prevented partition of China by European powers, 1900  Boxer risings in China, 1900  President McKinley assassinated, September, 1901  Theodore Roosevelt, president, 1901-1909  Separation of Church and State in France, 1905  San Francisco disaster, 1906  William H. Taft, president, 1909-1913  M. Blériot flew in an aeroplane from France to England, 1909  Oklahoma and Indian Territory admitted to the Union, 1907  New Mexico and Arizona admitted to the Union, 1912</p>
<p>Wells: The History of Mr. Polly; The New Machiavelli, 1910  Bennett: Clayhanger, 1910  Galsworthy: The Patrician, 1911;  The Dark Flower, 1913  Tagore: The Gardener; The Crescent Moon; Chitra, 1913  Alfred Noyes: Collected Poems, 1913  Robert Bridges, poet laureate, 1913  Conrad: Chance, 1914; Victory, 1915  Tagore: The King of the Dark Chamber, 1916  Masefield: Gallipoli, 1916  Wilfrid Wilson Gibson: Daily Bread, 1916  Drinkwater: Abraham Lincoln, 1918  Blasco Ibáñez: The Four Horsemen, 1918  Rupert Brooke: Collected Poems, 1919  Wells: The Outline of History, 1920</p>	<p>Population of the United States 91,972,266, in 1910  China became a republic, 1912  Woodrow Wilson, president, 1913-1921  Panama Canal completed, 1914  THE WORLD WAR, 1914-1918  Assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria at Sarajevo, June 28, 1914  Germany invaded France, August 2, 1914  Battle of the Marne, September 6-10, 1914  The two Russian revolutions. Establishment of the Bolshevik régime in Russia, 1917  The United States entered the war, April 6, 1917  Battle of Château-Thierry, July 18, 1918  Armistice signed, November 11, 1918  Signing of peace treaty at Versailles, June 28, 1919  First meeting of the League of Nations, from which Germany, Austria, Russia, and Turkey were excluded, and at which the United States was not represented, 1920  Warren G. Harding elected president, November, 1920  Population of the United States 105,683,108, in 1920</p>

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### AMERICAN PLAYS

#### CHAPTER OUTLINE

The unimportance of the American drama in literary history

The distinction between the American drama and the American theater

The history of the American theater

    The first two periods

    The third period

    The latest period

The history of the American drama

    The first two periods

    The third period

        Two theatrical craftsmen: Clyde Fitch and Augustus Thomas

        Two literary playwrights: Charles Rann Kennedy and Percy Mackaye

    The latest period

The American play in the high school

    Historical plays

    Plays of American scene

    Pageants

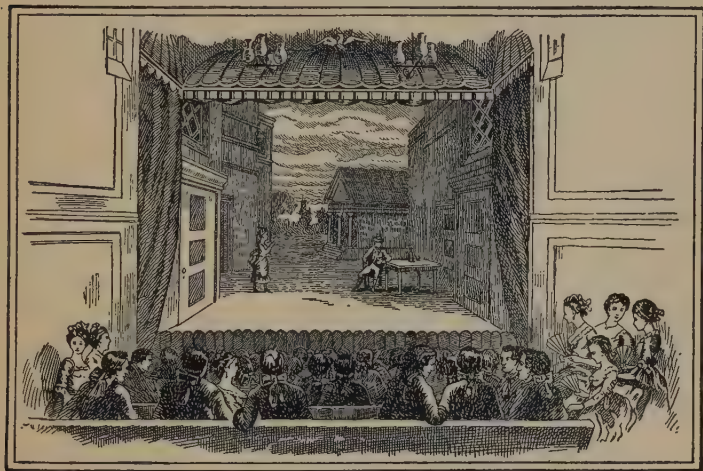
    One-act plays

**The unimportance of the American drama in literary history.**

Little or no mention of American drama is made in most general histories of American literature. This apparent neglect is due to the slight importance of American drama as compared with other types of literature. Both the drama as a literary form and the theater as a place of entertainment early suffered the same religious opposition that succeeded in closing the English theaters from 1642 to 1660. Later, when Puritan severity had somewhat relaxed, American drama, like the English in the two centuries after the Restoration and the reopening of the thea-



ters, was so far outdistanced by poetry, the novel, and the short story that it grew but slowly. During the years from 1890 on, the American theater was swept into the movement that tended toward country-wide combinations in every field of business, until the men who controlled the theater had a power and a position like that of the lumber kings and the railroad



THE OLD JOHN STREET THEATER, NEW YORK

magnates. Since American literary taste was not cultivated enough to make literary drama pay, men and women who wanted to write literary plays were discouraged or ignored until the rise of the art-theater movement in about 1910. Since this latest development the fresh interest in modern plays and play-writing has caused the reprinting of many old and new successes. But even as yet no history of the American drama has appeared (up to 1923), and since 1832 only one very imperfect history of the American theater.

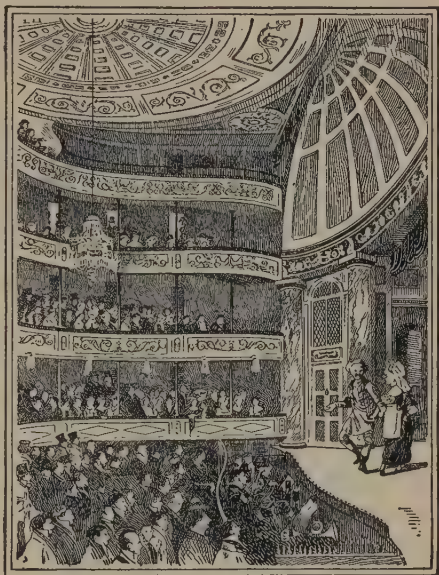
The distinction between the American drama and the American theater. It is worth pausing a moment to mark the distinction between these two terms,—the drama and the theater

(or stage),—for it is an important distinction, even though it is a very easy one to see. (1) The drama of any country, like its poetry or its fiction, is the drama written by its own authors, no matter what the subject is. A study of the American drama may, therefore, include plays by Americans located in almost every conceivable time and place. (2) On the other hand, the theater, or stage, is the place where plays are presented, no matter who wrote them. A history of the American theater, therefore, includes among other subjects the productions of plays by American authors, and by every sort of non-American from Sophocles to Bernard Shaw.

**The history of the American theater—the first two periods.** In the history of the American theater the first long trial period, lasting to the end of the Revolution, began near 1700 with the presentation of English plays by American amateurs, and was followed by the organization of professional companies that played through short and irregular seasons, the building of special playhouses, and at last the formation of permanent professional companies. A second period, lasting nearly a hundred years, saw the spread of the regular theaters along the Atlantic coast, out through the Ohio and lower Mississippi Valleys, and finally, with the gold rush of 1849, to California. It saw the development of many famous actors and actresses—from Edwin Forrest past Edwin Booth and Charlotte Cushman to Joseph Jefferson—through the hard discipline of playing scores and even hundreds of parts on the road; and it saw the rise of several really great stock companies,—such as that of the Boston Museum and that of Augustin Daly in New York,—the finest schools for acting that America has yet seen. This whole period was under the very distinct influence of English traditions.

**The third period in the history of the American theater.** The third period, beginning with the winter of 1895–1896, has to do with the operations of the theatrical syndicate, which for a time controlled the whole situation. Six enterprising managers, with central offices in New York City, succeeded in gaining control

of all the leading playhouses and almost all the leading players, crowding out of business any player or manager who would not market their choice of plays at their schedule of dates. For nearly fifteen years the syndicate were as effective in their field as the Standard Oil or the United Shoe Machinery Companies were in theirs. One actress, Mrs. Fiske, endured every sort of discomfort and, no doubt, heavy losses for the privilege of playing what, when, and where she pleased; but for a while she had her own way only to the extent of appearing in theaters so cheap that they were beneath the contempt of the monopoly. In the meanwhile, however, discontent spread, a rival firm of managers erected rival theaters, and, conducting their business in a little less



INTERIOR OF PARK THEATER, 1822

despotic manner, in 1910 they enlisted twelve hundred of the smaller revolting theaters with them and forced the syndicate to share the field. Since that time the theaters of America have been administered as well, perhaps, as such a business system will allow; but at best it is a mistaken system that puts a fine art in the market place and demands that it pay for itself because "business is business." This has never been said to the grand opera or to the symphony orchestra.

The first really great attempt to ask anything less of the modern drama in America—to demand no more of the play than

is demanded of the opera or the orchestra—was the founding of the celebrated and short-lived New Theater in New York (1909-1911). That it failed within two years is not half so important as that it was founded, that others on smaller scales



THE OLD BOWERY THEATER, 1860

have been founded and have failed, and that municipal theaters have sprung up here and there and are being supported on various plans. The great commercial managers are still in the saddle in the American theatrical world, but the uncommercial stage has been coming to be more important every year. The yeast of popular intelligence has been at work.

The latest period in the history of the American theater. It has been a natural step from the specially endowed and the muni-

cipal theaters to the formation of a great army of new companies in little theaters, theater workshops, country theaters, and school and college dramatic clubs. Related to these has been the spread of the movement for out-of-door community theaters and community pageants and the encouragement of traveling repertory companies playing classic and modern literary plays for colleges, summer schools, clubs, and the like. The ideals of this latest period, so far as they have crystallized, seem to be making for better dramatic literature; smaller, more inti-



mate playhouses; more artistic theater architecture and decoration; the use of conventionalized scenery, of symbolic coloring in costumes and lighting; and, as far as the actual playing goes, the new tendencies are toward natural—not stagy—acting, toward repertory playing as contrasted with long runs of single productions, toward an even distribution of rôles as against the “star” system, and toward the development of highly trained directors. The gathering power of this new period and its ideals is becoming evident in the increasing numbers of people who know good dramatic literature and desire it on the stage, and whose patronage is becoming commercially valuable in the growing support (not without its dangers) of native authors and in the increasing willingness of the commercial theater to learn what it can, and take what ideas and what people it can, from the little-theater movement.



THIS WAS DONE FOR SHAKESPEARE.  
WHY NOT FOR BOUCICAULT?

**The history of the American drama—the first two periods.** The history of the American drama did not make any real beginning until after the Revolution and the first trial period of theater history in this country. Then there came first a short time in which a few plays were written by American authors on American themes, some, like Tyler's "Contrast" (1787), on the life of the times, and some, like Dunlap's "André" (1798), on more or less recent history. In a second period, different in kind but somewhat overlapping the first, plays by Americans were written not by men of literary gifts, but by men who were practically connected with the theater as managers or producers. For the most

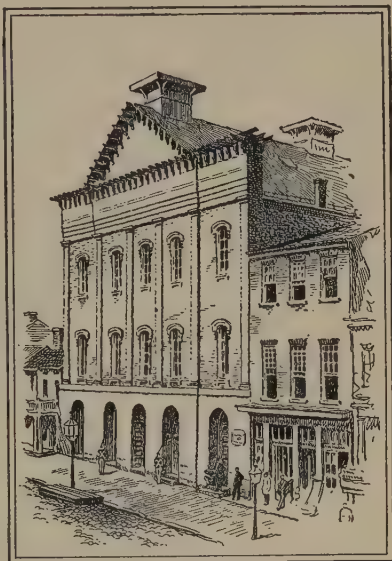


part their works imitated the successes of the day. Only a few had any distinction. John Howard Payne's "Brutus" (1818) was played by the leading tragedians for more than half a century; "Fashion" (1845), written by the actress who produced it, Mrs. Mowatt, deserved its success, for it was a bit of pointed social comedy; George H. Boker's "Francesca da Rimini" (1855) thrived long and has been revived within a very few years; "Rip Van Winkle" (1865) by an actor, Joseph Jefferson, and a professional theater man, Dion Boucicault (Boosiko), was a great favorite for a whole generation. The fact that there were many independent companies and managers who were eager for new plays was an encouragement to the playwrights. It naturally resulted in competition and spurred both managers and writers to experimenting in new fields. If the combination of the managers had not come so soon, the American literary drama of today might have dated its beginnings forty years earlier. But in the main the American drama from 1800 to 1890 was largely made up of imitations, translations, and adaptations, and more and more reflected the work of certain French and German popular playwrights.

**The third period in the history of the American drama.** The third period in the history of the American play covers about the same years as the corresponding period in the theater. On the whole it has not been an encouraging period for American dramatists. The desire of the theater magnates to turn the theater into an efficient money-making machine has made them appeal to the least cultivated of the American public because they represent the majority and can be counted on to fill the houses. Yet the '90's brought into view two Americans who were more than show-makers even though they were honestly trying to write plays that the public would spend their money for; and the first twenty years of the twentieth century has seen a steady output of literary and poetic dramas. Four men can be cited in confirmation.

**Two theatrical craftsmen—Clyde Fitch (1865-1909) and Augustus Thomas (1859- ).** Clyde Fitch in twenty years

wrote and produced on the stage thirty-three plays and adapted and staged twenty-three more—an immense output. In the first ten years the most important were all built on historical themes: "Beau Brummel" (1890), "Nathan Hale" (1898), and "Barbara Frietchie" (1899). In the second ten years the keynote was struck with "The Climbers" (1901), a social exposure of a shallow city woman, who is lost to all fine impulses or natural emotions. Other plays of this type are on wifely constancy in "The Stubbornness of Geraldine" (1902), jealousy in "The Girl with the Green Eyes" (1902), and petty dishonesty in "The Truth" (1906). Fitch was never profound—never tried to be; but he had an element of wisdom, or at least worldly wisdom, in his plays, and he combined a command of good dialogue, good scenes, and good construction. Augustus Thomas has lived in the atmosphere of the theater from boyhood, and since 1887 has been a professional playwright. His first widely known works were the plays of states—"Alabama" (1891), "In Mizzoura" (1893), and "Arizona" (1899)—plays which exerted the same general appeal as "Nathan Hale" and "Barbara Frietchie." As a practical man of the theater he has adapted old material and dramatized various novels, and in recent years he has written a succession of plays that deal with themes of general interest at the moment. Thus the same drift of thought that led Mark Twain to write his essay on "Mental



FORD'S THEATER, WASHINGTON, D. C.,  
WHERE LINCOLN WAS SHOT, 1865

Telepathy" and Hamlin Garland his book on "The Shadow World" accounts for Thomas's "Witching Hour" (1907) and for his treatment of the complex problems of the modern family in "As a Man Thinks" (1911). Up to 1920 Thomas had composed and adapted nearly fifty plays. In his later ones he has



THE CORRIDOR OF A FASHIONABLE THEATER (ACADEMY OF MUSIC, PHILADELPHIA), 1870, DURING THE ARRIVAL OF THE AUDIENCE

combined his highly developed ability to tell a story through action with a clear—and sometimes almost too clear—moral purpose. In "The Harvest Moon" (1909) he makes a playwright character say, "I would willingly give the rest of my life to go back, and take from my plays every word that has made men less happy, less hopeful, less kind."

Two literary playwrights—Charles Rann Kennedy and Percy Mackaye. On account of the great and lasting popularity of one of his plays, "The Servant in the House," Charles Rann Kennedy (1871– ) should stand as a leading representative

of the literary playwrights of the present in America. He was born in England, but since the beginning of his authorship he has lived in the United States, of which he has become a citizen. His dramatic work has fallen into two groups: "The Terrible Meek" and "The Necessary Evil"—Short Plays for Small Casts; and his Seven Plays for Seven Players—"The Winterfeast" (1906), "The Servant in the House" (1907), "The Idol-Breaker" (1913), "The Rib of the Man" (1916), "The Army with Banners" (1917), "The Fool from the Hills" (1919), and "The Isle of the Blest" (not completed in 1920). This series has been written in a spirit of high seriousness and of high defiance. Adam—himself the Idol-Breaker—threw down the definite challenge:

"I've told these people things before. Many times. Why, it was me, six years ago, as called them here, and told them of the brotherhood of man." [Cf. "The Servant in the House."]

"Well, didn't they listen to you, that time?" says Naomi.

"Ay, at first," replies Adam, "while I was new to them. Then they turned again to idols; and twisted my plain meaning into tracts for Sunday School. I up and spoke again, and told them of the lies and hate they lived by. [Cf. "The Winterfeast."] Shewed them the death and bitterness of it! Well, they soon let me know about that. I preached their own God's gospel to them, and brought their own Christ's Murder to their own blood-stained doors. [Cf. "The Terrible Meek."] They spat upon me. I told them of the lusts as fed their brothels; [Cf. "The Necessary Evil"] and every red-eyed wolf among them said I lied. . . . This time it's freedom—the thing they're always bragging of; and as long as I am in the world, they'll have it dinned into their heads, as freedom isn't all a matter of flags and soldiers' pop-guns. It's something they've to sweat for."

Only one of Kennedy's plays has achieved a popular triumph; but they all repay study and disclose new depths with each rereading. It may be that the audiences now developing will one day turn to the others as they already have to the "Servant in the House."



With the development of these new audiences no playwright in America has concerned himself more than has Percy Mac-kaye (1875- ), for his history has been one with the rise of pageantry and the civic festival. He has written some twenty-five plays, pageants, and operas. He began with a succession of echoes from the literary past,—plays like "The Canterbury Pilgrims" (1903), "Jeanne D'Arc" (1906), and "Sappho and Phaon" (1907); but his special contribution has been to the movement toward an uncommercialized theater through the preparation of many community pageants. These include the Saint Gaudens Pageant at Cornish, New Hampshire (1905), the Gloucester Pageant (1903), "Sanctuary, a Bird Masque" (1913), "St. Louis, a Civic Masque" (1914), "Caliban, a Community Masque" (New York, 1916, and Boston, 1917). On a smaller scale his one-act "Yankee Fantasies" are especially adaptable to school presentation, and his ballad drama, "George Washington" (1920), unsuccessful in a New York theater, has untried possibilities as an out-of-door community play.

**The latest period in the history of the American drama.** As a result of these quiet developments during the last thirty years the public response to the drama as a genuine literary form has been on the steady increase. And now that there is a modest market for artistic plays in little-theater groups and in communities where the school interest is a strong factor, authors are turning from the short story and the novel to writing plays that are worth reading as well as worth seeing in the theater. These include many one-act plays, this being a form especially cultivated of late, and connected with the long play as the short story is with the novel. As an outgrowth of this spreading interest, publishers are putting out many books about the drama, and many volumes of plays. Commercial managers are beginning to bid for the plays of authors who have first succeeded in the people's theaters. It is clear beyond all question that there are interesting developments ahead. How important they may be no one knows.



## SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What are some reasons for the unimportance of American drama in American literary history?
2. What is the distinction between the American drama and the American theater? Mention some non-American plays that have been of great importance on the American stage.
3. How long a stretch of time is included in the combined first two periods in the history of the American theater? What national influence dominated throughout them?
4. What was the chief feature of the third period in the theater, and what was the first ambitious attempt in a new direction?
5. What tendencies are notable in the present period in American theater history?
6. What kinds of plays and playwrights prevailed in the first two periods in the history of the American drama?
7. In the third drama period what two playwrights, connected with the commercial theater, helped to improve the standard of American plays? What two poetic playwrights have made important contributions?
8. How do present tendencies in the American uncommercial theater serve as encouragements to literary dramatists?

## THE AMERICAN PLAY IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

In any general history of American literature the drama and the stage deserve more attention than has usually been given them. But in a school text the American drama may have only such incidental mention as this, because other subjects, and even other literary subjects, crowd in so heavily upon it. If drama courses, aside from Shakespeare, are offered, they are not confined to the works of any one nation or language. A course on modern drama, for instance, will almost certainly include not only works by English and American authors, but translations from French, German, Italian, Spanish, Norwegian, and Russian originals. And again, if a school has a stage and equipment for play-giving, the plays may be drawn from any source. The only

requirements are that they be appropriate for the occasion and suitable for the limited powers of the actors.

The real question, then, to be raised in such a book as this is, What American plays (together with a very few English plays on American themes) may well be presented on the school stage, and what special values have they? The answers can best be given in topical form.

### HISTORICAL PLAYS

Historical plays have a value in connection both with the study of formal history and of literary history. They perform the double service of illustrating (1) the history of the drama for the years in which they were written, and (2) the history of a nation for the years about which they were written. Representative plays of this type include:

J. N. Barker's "Superstition"<sup>1</sup> (1824)—late seventeenth-century New England.

Percy Mackaye's "The Scarecrow"<sup>1</sup> (1910)—seventeenth-century New England.

G. W. P. Custis's "Pocahontas"<sup>1</sup> (1830)—seventeenth-century Virginia.

William Dunlap's "André"<sup>1</sup> (1798)—Revolutionary War.

Clyde Fitch's "Nathan Hale" (1898)—Revolutionary War. In "Plays" of Fitch, Vol. I (memorial edition, edited by Montrose J. Moses and Virginia Gerson. Little, Brown & Company, 1915).

Percy Mackaye's "Washington" (1919)—eighteenth-century Virginia and Revolutionary War. Alfred A. Knopf.

Dion Boucicault's "The Octoroon"<sup>1</sup> (1859)—the South "before the War."

Jefferson and Boucicault's "Rip Van Winkle"<sup>1</sup> (1865)—Revolutionary War period.

George Bernard Shaw's "The Devil's Disciple" (1906)—eighteenth-century New England. In "Three Plays for Puritans." Brentano's.

Bronson Howard's "Shenandoah"<sup>1</sup> (1889)—the Civil War.

William Gillette's "Secret Service"<sup>1</sup> (1896)—the Civil War.

<sup>1</sup>Included in "Representative American Plays," edited by A. H. Quinn. The Century Co., 1917.

Clyde Fitch's "Barbara Frietchie" (1896)—the Civil War. In Vol. II of memorial edition of "Plays" by Clyde Fitch, edited by M. J. Moses and V. Gerson. Little, Brown & Company, 1915.

John Drinkwater's "Abraham Lincoln" (1919)—the Middle West and the Civil War. In Dickinson's "Chief Contemporary Dramatists," 2d series. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921.

### PLAYS OF AMERICAN SCENE

Plays definitely set in America, whether city society plays or pictures of country life, are like the historical plays in having a double value and a double interest. They of course illustrate the history of the drama; but they illustrate general history too, though instead of centering around a famous character, or event, or series of events, they picture the ways of the world in America in a given period. Representative plays of this type include:

Royall Tyler's "The Contrast" (1787) in "Representative American Plays," edited by Quinn.

Anna C. Mowatt's "Fashion" (1845) in "Representative American Plays," edited by Quinn.

Bronson Howard's "Saratoga" (1870). Samuel French, 1898.

Augustus Thomas's "Alabama" (1891) (Chicago Dramatic Publishing Co., 1898); "In Mizzoura" (1893) (Samuel French, 1918); "Arizona" (1899) (Chicago Dramatic Publishing Co., 1899).

Clyde Fitch's "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines" (1901) in Vol. II of "Plays" by Clyde Fitch, edited by M. J. Moses and V. Gerson. Little, Brown & Company.

The best collections of American plays include:

George P. Baker's "Modern American Plays" (5 plays). Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920.

Thomas H. Dickinson's "Chief Contemporary Dramatists" (4 American plays). Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915.

Montrose J. Moses's "Representative Plays by American Dramatists" (3 vols.: Vol. I (1918) contains 10 plays, 1759-1824; Vol. II announced; Vol. III (1921) contains 10 plays, 1856-1911). E. P. Dutton & Company.

A. H. Quinn's "Representative American Plays" (25 plays, 1769-1911). The Century Co., 1917.

Among the important books on contemporary drama are the following:

Richard Burton's "The New American Drama." Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1913.

Sheldon Cheney's "The New Movement in the Theatre." Mitchell Kennerley, 1914.

Barrett H. Clark's "The British and American Drama of Today." Henry Holt and Company, 1915.

Thomas H. Dickinson's "The Case of American Drama." Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915.

W. P. Eaton's "The American Stage of To-day." Small, Maynard and Company, 1908.

Percy Mackaye's "The Playhouse and the Play." The Macmillan Company, 1909.

### PAGEANTS

Pageants again are historical in value and interest, important in enlisting the coöperation of all parts of a school and all elements of a community, and adapted especially to out-of-door presentation and the times of year when this is possible. It is hardly profitable to list special pageants because the great majority were written for special places and occasions. The best sources of school material are

Constance D'Arcy Mackay's "Patriotic Plays and Pageants for Young People" (Henry Holt and Company, 1912) and "Plays of the Pioneers: a Book of Historical Pageant-Plays" (Harper & Brothers, 1915).

The outstanding books on the theory of the pageant are

Percy Mackaye's "The Civic Theatre" (Mitchell Kennerley, 1912); "Community Drama" (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917).

### ONE-ACT PLAYS

The one-act play while not a new form is so identified with the new theater movement as to be a special feature in modern theater history. It is naturally specially adapted to school use on account of the simplicity of setting, the smallness of the

cast, and the resulting ease in presentation. The lists which follow, as well as those which precede, are continually subject to change through the publication of new books. These in the judgment of the compiler are adequate up to the spring of 1922. The best collections of one-act plays are the following:

Helen L. Cohen's "One-Act Plays by Modern Authors" (16 plays, 6 American). Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921.

Margaret A. Mayorga's "Representative One-Act Plays by American Authors" (24 plays). Little, Brown & Company, 1920.

Frank Shay's "Contemporary One-Act Plays—American" (20 plays). Stewart Kidd Company, 1922.

Carolina Folk Plays. Henry Holt and Company, 1922.

Frank Shay and Pierre Loving's "Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays" (one third American plays). Stewart Kidd Company, 1920.

The most interesting one-act plays written for clubs or groups are

Plays of the 47 Workshop. Brentano's, 1918.

Plays of the Harvard Dramatic Club. Brentano's, 1918.

Provincetown Plays, Series 1, 2, 3. George Cram Cook and Frank Shay, editors. Stewart Kidd Company, 1916.

Washington Square Plays. Doubleday, Page & Company, 1916.

Wisconsin Plays, Series 1 and 2. B. W. Huebsch, 1914 and 1918.

Interesting volumes of one-act plays by individual authors are

Theodore Dreiser's "Plays of the Natural and Supernatural." John Lane Company, 1916.

Kenneth Sawyer Goodman's "Quick Curtains." Stage Guild, Chicago, 1915.

Alfred Kreymborg's "Plays for Poet Mimes." The Other Press, New York, 1918.

Constance D'Arcy Mackay's "The Forest Princess and Other Masques" (Henry Holt and Company, 1915) and "The Beau of Bath and Other One-Act Plays" (Henry Holt and Company, 1916).

Percy Mackaye's "Yankee Fantasies." Duffield & Company, 1912.

Jeanette A. Marks's "Three Welsh Plays." Little, Brown & Company, 1917.



George Middleton's "Embers and Other One-Act Plays" (Henry Holt and Company, 1911); "Tradition and Other One-Act Plays" (Henry Holt and Company, 1913); "Possession and Other One-Act Plays" (Henry Holt and Company, 1915).

Eugene G. O'Neill's "Thirst and Other One-Act Plays." The Gorham Press, Boston, 1914.

Thomas Wood Stevens and Kenneth Sawyer Goodman's "Masques of East and West." Vaughan and Gomme, New York, 1914.

Ridgley Torrence's "The Rider of Dreams, and Other One-Act Plays." The Macmillan Company, 1917.

Stuart Walker's "Portmanteau Plays." Stewart Kidd Company, 1917.

Percival Wilde's "Confessional and Other American Plays." Henry Holt and Company, 1916.

The following are the best books on the one-act play:

Barrett H. Clark's "How to Produce Amateur Plays." Little, Brown & Company, 1917.

Walter P. Eaton's Introduction to "Washington Square Plays." Doubleday, Page & Company, 1916.

Lewis B. Roland's "The Technique of the One-Act Play." John W. Luce & Company, Boston, 1918.

Valuable books on the little-theater movement are

Louise Burleigh's "The Community Theatre." Little, Brown & Company, 1917.

Sheldon Cheney's "The Art Theatre." Alfred A. Knopf, 1917.

Thomas H. Dickinson's "The Insurgent Theatre." B. W. Huebsch, 1917.

Constance D'Arcy Mackay's "The Little Theatre in the United States." Henry Holt and Company, 1917.

Valuable books on producing plays in schools are

Clarence Stratton's "Producing for Little Theatres." Henry Holt and Company, 1921.

Claude M. Wise's "Dramatics for School and Community." Stewart Kidd Company, 1923.

	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
New York Evening Post, 1801-													
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Godey's Lady's Book, 1830-1898													
New England Magazine, 1831-1835													
Liberator, 1831-1865													
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Western Monthly Magazine, 1833-1836													
Knickerbocker Magazine, 1833-1865													
Southern Literary Messenger, 1834-1865													
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Gentleman's Magazine, 1837-1841													
Democratic Review, 1837-1859													
Dial (Boston), 1840-1844													
Graham's Magazine, 1841-1859													
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Broadway Journal, 1845													
Home Journal, 1847-													
Independent, 1848-													
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Conservator, 1890-													
Yale Review, 1892-													
McClure's Magazine, 1893-													
Everybody's Magazine, 1899-													
Poetry Magazine, 1912-													
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- Yale College, 80, 102, 126, 127, 146, 370
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Advice

Be slow of giving advice  
ready to do a service

a word before is  
worth two after.

Nothing is so liberally  
given as advice.

He asks advice in  
vain who will not  
follow it.

It is better to seek  
advice at the beginning  
than at the end.

Advice after misstep  
is like medicine after  
death.

Advice to a fool  
goes in at one ear & out  
at the other.

advisors are not givers

Se 2 per

7 Charity 19

Charity

Cast thy bread to the poor,  
and it shall be multiplied.

Charity <sup>shall</sup> cover a multitude  
of sins.

He sends his present with  
a heart attached  
He who gives to the poor  
shall be rich to the Lord

Mr. Lawrence

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John Dutton



